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Talks to children







# TALKS TO CHILDREN

T. T. EATON, D.D. LL. D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
REV. JOHN A. BROADUS, D. D.

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Fleming H. Revell Company

Chicago : New York : Toronto

*Publishers of Evangelical Literature*

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
JOHN LAWRENCE SMITH, M.D., LL.D.  
COR. MEMBER INSTITUT DE FRANCE, ETC.,  
WHO  
"LOVED GOD AND LITTLE CHILDREN,"  
THIS VOLUME  
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,  
IN TOKEN OF HIGH PERSONAL REGARD, AND IN  
RECOGNITION OF THE GREAT SERVICE  
HE DID FOR THE CHILDREN OF  
THIS AND SUCCEEDING  
GENERATIONS.



## PREFACE.

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These talks were prepared for actual delivery without any thought of publication. Many addresses to children are simply strings of anecdotes with morals. In these talks, while anecdotes have not been wholly discarded, the aim has been to get the young interested in the Bible itself, by making its scenes real and its truths impressive. If only the young can be brought to love the Bible, the gravest problems of our times will be solved.

It has been deemed best to retain the original form of these discourses and to give them as real "talks" rather than as essays to the young. They are published by the advice of honored friends, and in the hope that they may prove in some way helpful.



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## INTRODUCTION

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Preaching to children is a characteristic of our time. In every age preachers have sometimes addressed certain portions of a discourse especially to children, and on rare occasions have even made them a formal address. But only within our century, and chiefly within half a century, has such a practice become common. Omitting Massillon's "Little Lent," ten sermons in Lent addressed to Louis XV., when nine years old, the earliest volumes of special discourses to children with which I am acquainted are John Todd's *Lectures to Children*, 1834, and Dr. Arnold's *Rugby Sermons*, of about the same date, both of them still interesting and profitable. Within the last twenty years many such books have appeared in England and America, and the number is now rapidly increasing. These represent a very large

number of such discourses annually delivered.

Here is one of the ideas of the age to which nobody need object. In many directions the evangelical minister has to oppose strong tendencies of the time, and it is pleasant to think of a favorite idea which all can approve. Besides the great good thus directly done to the children themselves, this practice greatly interests parents. Sam Slick says, "The road to a woman's heart lies through her child." Still oftener have irreligious fathers been drawn to general attendance upon preaching and public worship by some sermon to their children. Besides, sermons specially adapted to children are also extremely well suited to a large proportion of grown people. Dr. Richard Newton of Philadelphia, who has printed a far greater number of excellent sermons to children than any other preacher, says he used to notice that a man of his congregation who seldom came to church at other times always attended the monthly sermon to children. On being at length pleasantly asked the reason,

he said, "I understand these sermons best;" and he was not an ignorant man. One great benefit of frequently preaching to children is that a minister thus learns better how to preach to grown folks, both in the way of *simplifying* and of *enlivening* the religious instruction.

A point of great importance in making special sermons to children is, that these should become the means of encouraging them to attend upon, and listen to, our ordinary ministrations. To this end preachers have tried a variety of methods. Some now and then, perhaps at monthly or quarterly intervals, take the afternoon for a sermon of this sort; others take even the forenoon. Some are content with frequent addresses in closing the Sunday School; but it is important that these should not take away much time from the lessons, often grievously neglected, nor from the singing, in which the young are apt to delight. Some give a brief discourse, or "sermonette," to children, as a *prelude* to the regular morning sermon—ex-

cellent examples may be found in Dr. Alex. MacLeod's recent volume, "The Children's Portion"—and others even make an *interlude* to children, during a pause in the main discourse. This suggests a practice of great value, viz., that one shall frequently, in the course of ordinary sermons, mention the children, or address avowedly to them some illustration of a thought or explanation of a word, some wholesome lesson or loving appeal. It must by no means be intimated that they are very ignorant; human nature, of whatsoever age, resents such an imputation. But many a point likely to interest children may be introduced by a single word of special address or allusion to them, so as to gain a close attention which may then be for some time retained.

In general, there ought not to be too great a difference in style, tone, spirit, between the talk to children and the regular sermon. A good many ministers do, as it were, play the organ in ordinary sermons, and in addressing children play the banjo or the jewsharp.

The two classes of discourses should be on the same gamut, without essential incongruity, and with no difficulty in making the transition from one to the other. Then the familiar addresses or set sermons to children, will win them to care more for the pastor's other preaching.

Dr. Eaton's method in the discourses here printed has been to give them from time to time at the main hour of morning worship. Two of these I have heard, and have noticed the lively and sustained interest of all around me, young and old. It appears to me that these sermons are remarkably well suited to interest and profit the young, and are examples deserving the careful study of other ministers. The Scripture stories are brought out with vivid narration, and sometimes dramatic reproduction, yet, according to my taste, without violating reverence for the Bible, and for Him of whom it speaks. The way of salvation is carefully taught, by statements and illustrations adapted to the child-mind. Various moral lessons are so inculcated

as to make holiness and usefulness seem very beautiful, and wickedness seem ugly and hateful; thus helping—a most important thing for young and old—to educate the moral taste. In all Sunday School libraries, and in the numerous families that love to supply their children with attractive and helpful books, I think that it will be found that these “Talks” will be read with interest, leaving a good taste in the mouth of the young folks, attracting them to the Saviour and stirring them to do right. And often in the family circle might they be read aloud, by parent to children, or by child to parents.

JOHN A. BROADUS.

# Talks to Children.

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## I.

### EYES FOR THE BLIND.

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*"Go wash in the pool of Siloam."*—John ix: 7.

The Feast of Tabernacles was going on in Jerusalem, and Jesus had come up to attend it. On the Sabbath he was going along with his disciples, probably either going to the temple or away from it, for the blind beggars usually sat near the gates of the temple. They did it because there was where everybody went, and more people would pass by them near the temple than anywhere else. Beggars always like to get where crowds go by, hoping the more people there are the more they will receive. Whether this blind beggar sat by the temple gate or by the roadside, it

was a fortunate thing for him that he sat there on that Sabbath day. As the disciples came to where the blind man was sitting, Jesus looked at him earnestly. When the disciples noticed that, they also looked at the man and stopped still in the way. The blind beggar heard them stop and he turned his poor sightless eyes toward them and put out his hands as if he thought they were going to give him something. But instead of feeling a penny put into his hand, he hears them ask, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" How badly that must have made the poor man feel! Instead of being sorry for him and giving him a kind word, if they could not do any more, here they were talking about his sins and his parents'; for since he was born blind, it must have been some sin of his parents, if it was any sin at all. Now that was unkind in the disciples to stand right there before the poor man and talk in that way. And it was no excuse for them that they did not think. We must not hurt people's feelings and then try to excuse our



selves by saying we didn't think. We ought to think, it is our business to think, and if we were not so wrapped up in ourselves we would think. Perhaps the disciples forgot that the man could hear, since he could not see, or else they would have waited to ask their question till they were out of hearing.

"Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" That was simple curiosity about things that were too high for them. They wished to understand God's reasons for what He does. Any question they ought to ask, and which would help to make them better, Jesus was always ready to answer. But he would never gratify idle curiosity. However, since they had a wrong idea of the way God rules the world, he told them, and how pleasant his voice must have sounded to that poor man: "Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but that the works of God should be manifest in him." Christ did not mean that this man and his parents were not sinners, but that it was not for any sin they had done that this man was born blind. In-

stead of wondering about the sin, the disciples ought to have been thanking God for being so good to them as to give them eyes, and they ought to have been thinking what they could do for the poor blind man, Jesus was thinking of him while he went on talking to them about working, and perhaps the blind man thought he would forget him and walk on, but he was busy at work for the poor man. He spat on the ground and made mud. The man could hear him talking but could not see what he was doing. All at once he feels gentle hands on his eyes spreading the clay upon them. How still he sat! He was almost afraid to breathe, for fear of disturbing the Master. When the eyes were well covered Jesus for the first time speaks to the man: "Go wash in the pool of Siloam," and then they went on their way leaving the blind man by the wayside.

We know he was not sitting there alone. Jerusalem was filled with crowds who had come up to the feast. The people were camping in their booths all over the hills around.

For this feast was meant to celebrate their passing through the wilderness when they had no houses, but lived in tents, and so for seven days they lived in booths. They put up posts and laid sticks across them and then covered them with branches of trees to keep out the sun and the rain. These booths were in the streets, on the housetops and on the hills around the city, and it did not take long for a crowd to gather when anything was going on. Men and boys would stop as they saw Jesus mixing the clay and spreading it on the eyes of the blind man, and others would stop because they saw a crowd standing there, and so on till a great concourse would gather. And they would stay to see what the blind man would do after Jesus had passed on.

“Go wash in the pool of Siloam.” The blind man could not see a bit better than he could before. His eyes were only unpleasantly stuck up by the mud on them—clay is such sticky stuff. The stranger who put the clay on his eyes had not promised that he should see—he had simply told him to go and wash

in the pool. He would lose a great deal of time while the crowds were passing, by going to the pool. This was the best time of all for him to beg. And besides, if going and washing did him no good he would feel that he had made a fool of himself. But this man had heard of Jesus before, as we see from the way he speaks of him afterward to the Pharisees, and although the disciples had not mentioned Jesus' name, there were some in the company who could tell his name. The man had faith enough to get up from his seat and go feeling his way along slowly to the pool of Siloam. If he had not had some faith he would have kept his place, saying, "It is no use. This clay stops my eyes up and does not open them. I know the water of Siloam cannot make me see. I never heard of a blind man's being cured in that way, and never heard of a man who was born blind being cured at all. Besides, if that teacher had power to open my eyes and was willing, he could have done it just as well without making me go through all this. Besides, I'm ashamed to be seen go

ing through the streets with mud on my face. Now is the best time for me to beg money from the people, and I've got a good place here to beg. If I leave, some other beggar will get my place, and there's no telling how much I shall lose. I will not go a step—at least not till I see that the clay is doing me some good. When I begin to see a little from its use then will be time enough to start to Siloam." If he had talked in that way he would have died blind. Whoever wants a blessing from God must trust Him. We must even trust our fellow men or we would never do anything in the world. Suppose one man was working for another and neither was willing to trust the other at all. The one would not trust the other man who hired him, to pay him when the work was done, and the other would not trust the man he had hired to do the work after he was paid. One would work a minute and then demand pay for that minute before he would work any more, and so it would go. Why, nobody would ever get anything done. Yet that shows what would

happen if people refused to trust each other.

This man trusted Jesus. He got up from his seat and started to the pool of Siloam. He knew the way. He had been feeling his way through the streets of Jerusalem all his life, and had learned to go about the city as blind people often do. He was a bright hearted, earnest, up and down sort of man, who would not let the grass grow under his feet when he had anything to do. And the crowd went with him, probably saying, "Come along boys, let us see the end of this thing." The crowd of idle men and boys who collect around the streets were of the same sort then they are now. You can easily imagine how such people would talk as they went along with the blind man. Would they encourage him and talk hopefully to him, do you think? Would they say, "That's right, Jesus knew what he was about when he told you to go. He has cured blind men before, and he would not have sent you unless he knew your eyes would be cured. Cheer up, don't be down hearted, you will soon see; now it is not much

farther to the pool. And won't you be happy? How delightful it will be to see the sun, the sky, and all the beautiful colors. Why, it will be like getting into a new world for you; and then you'll be happier than if you had not been born blind. You can hear better than any of us now, and your touch is so nice that your fingers are almost as good as our eyes, and you will have them and your eyes too!" They might have talked to the blind man in that pleasant, encouraging way, if they would; but we know very well from what we have heard and known of such crowds, that those who went with the blind man did no such thing. Children, why don't people say pleasant things whenever they can? Why don't they always look on the bright side for others in their troubles and in their work? Is it because they think things will turn out badly, and they like to say, "I told you so"?

How they laughed and jeered at that poor man as he went on slowly through the streets to the pool of Siloam. "Hi! look at him, boys." "The clay is working already." "I

know he can see some out of this eye, for I saw him wink at that man." "What will you take for your new eye-salve?" "Where do you get your ointment, Mister?" "What a fool to think that mud put on his eyes and then washed off, will make him see!" Others probably talked about Jesus sending him to the pool and said: "It is a shame to raise the poor man's hopes that way. He was always bright and wonderfully contented for one so unfortunate, and now his disappointment will hurt him so. That teacher ought to be ashamed of himself to play off such a joke on a poor blind man who had never done him any harm." Perhaps friends met him, and asking him where he was going, tried to discourage him. "Why, clay can't give you sight, my poor friend! They do say that it is good for weak eyes, and I've heard that Siloam water is good for sick folk; but since the world began, has no man cured one who was born blind. Neither Moses nor Elijah ever opened the eyes of one born blind. It's all of no use. How could you be so silly as



to pay any attention to what that man said? If he could have cured you he would have done so on the spot. He sent you to Siloam only to get you out of the way."

But in spite of all everybody could say, the man went straight on toward the pool. He did not stop to answer them. If he had stopped to argue against all the people and to prove to them they were wrong, his eyes would never have been opened. He just smiled good naturedly, and went on. He knew the best answer he could make to all the things they said about him and about Jesus, was to go on to the pool, wash, and then show them he could see. That would prove it much better than all the talking he could do. So on he went, and on they followed. Jesus had told him to "Go wash in the pool of Siloam," and it was his business to go there and wash just as quickly as he could. That was his part, and his seeing afterward was Jesus' part. The trouble with us often is that we wish to do God's part, or we wish Him to explain to us how He does it, instead

of doing like this blind man and doing our part, leaving God to do His. Of course we cannot do God's part, and all our trying and all our inquiring how He is going to do it, only take up our time and use up our strength, so we neglect to do our part. Suppose the blind man had sat still and demanded that Jesus should explain to him exactly what was the matter with his eyes, which kept him from seeing, and just what must be done to enable him to see—Jesus would have passed on, and the man would have died blind.

At length he comes to the pool. The boys climb up all around where they can see, and the men gather close to the edge. Everybody is watching him. They do not say anything now—they are too busy looking to see what will be the result. There will be time enough to talk when he is through his washing. The blind man's heart beats fast as he stoops down on the edge of the pool, feels for the water, dips his hand in and slowly washes the clay from his eyes. His head is hung so far over the water that the others cannot see his eyes

and besides, the lids are still closed and they could tell nothing. It seems to their impatience that he washes the clay off very slowly. At last it is all gone. He quits dipping his hand into the water now, and straightens himself up, turns toward the temple, and then slowly opens his eyes. They hold their breath for a minute while those eyes, large and full, and bright as theirs, look silently at the temple and the sky, with awe kindling in their depths, and then at their faces as if asking for sympathy in his joy. They have made fun of him and discouraged him, but he has forgotten all that. They know what it is to see. They see all that he sees and understand it, as he does not. Though they are strangers and mockers, this hard hearted street crowd that have followed him, yet are they touched to see him so glad. They do not try to make fun of him now, and eyes, which you would think could not weep, fill with tears, as they look upon him. One little boy cried out, "He sees! he does see!" and the hardest heart there was stirred by the simple words. Then

the crowd scattered to tell the wonderful story of this great miracle which Jesus had done. Since the world began it was never heard that one born blind received his sight. And the man goes to his home gladdened at every step by the sights which are so fresh and new to him, thinking over every word he had heard Jesus speak and feeling his heart warm to the disciples, even though they had talked about him and his parents in a way that was unkind.

I suppose that man had often thought as he sat begging, and so many people, who could see, went by him, "What have I done that I should be blind?" There are people who complain of misfortune, and who go so far as to say, "I did not deserve it." I hope as you grow up you will never say anything so wicked as that, and that you will not even think it in your hearts. When this man was a boy and could not play ball or anything the other boys played, he may often have thought, "What have I done that I should not be like other boys?" Now if he was

pious and loved God, whenever he had such thoughts, he would say right away,—“God is very much kinder to me than I deserve, and I’m glad other people can see if I cannot.” That is the right way to feel when others have things that you do not, and that is the brave and manly way to feel—to thank God for what blessings you have and be glad other people have blessings you have not. Complaining only makes things worse. If that little blind boy had been sullen and mad all the time because others could see while he could not, or had been crying all the time because he was blind, that would not have helped his eyes at all, and would have made him twice as miserable and would have made the boys hate to have him around when they were playing.

Besides, if we complain of anything which other people have and we have not, we may be complaining of the very thing we will be gladdest about some day. For you see, we do not know what God intends to do by and by. Don’t you think that man is glad to-day,

up in heaven, that he was born blind? He did not go to Jesus, like the young ruler. If he had had his eyesight and been busy he might never have paid any attention to what he heard about Jesus, and might have been among those who six months later cried "Crucify him!" "Crucify him!" Jesus passed hundreds of people that day to whom he did not stop and speak. It was because this man was blind that the Lord spoke to him and not only opened his eyes but led him to true faith, as we see from what follows. If he had not been blind he would not have been sitting there as Jesus passed by. Many of the boys who had their eyes and who may have laughed at their blind companion never knew Jesus and are now lost, while the blind one was saved. Oh! is he not glad he was born blind, as he sits in heaven to-day? Is he not glad God chose him to show forth His glory? A thing may seem to us a great affliction at the time, and yet that very thing may be the greatest blessing we could have.

A friend who lived in Alabama told me of

something which happened to a neighbor. He was a very wicked man in some things, and was a terrible swearer. He used oaths which would make even bad men shudder. He even went so far as to swear at God, and there are not many men bad enough to do that. They take God's name in vain in swearing at other men or at their horses, or at anything which makes them angry. But they do not dare to curse God. One day he was angry because it did not rain when his crops needed it, and he was swearing most awful oaths at God when all at once his voice stopped and he could not speak a word. He worked his tongue and lips to make words, but no words came. The man felt frightened and humbled. He went to a city to consult the doctors. They examined his throat but did not see that they could do anything for him. His dumbness did not get any better for all that the doctors did for him, and it made him think about how wicked he had been. Then he thought of how good God had been to him. He thought how ungrate-

ful he had been in using for swearing the voice God had given him to say kind and good words; and it seemed to him right that the voice he had misused should be taken away from him. When he felt how wicked he had been and how much he deserved punishment, he began to want God to forgive him and to find some way by which it would be right for God to forgive his sins. You know it would not be right for God to forgive sinners if Christ had not made an atonement for them. So the man studied the Bible, and went to church, for he could hear as well as ever. The Bible and the preacher told him of Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and of how God forgave sins for Jesus' sake. The man became a Christian, and some time afterward he was carrying on a conversation with my friend, writing his answers on a slate, and when asked what he thought of his dumbness he wrote that there was no blessing God had ever given him for which he was so grateful, and he could never thank Him enough for taking



away his voice. For if he had not lost his speech in just some such startling way he would probably have gone on and died in his sins. It was amazing grace that had reached a wretch like him. I do not know whether the man ever recovered his voice, for my friend removed to Tennessee and lost sight of him; but I'm sure if ever his speech did return, one of the first uses he made of it was to sing that hymn;

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
Which saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now I'm found;  
Was blind, but now I see.”

God meant blindness as a blessing to this man whom Christ told to “Go wash in the pool of Siloam,” and had intended it so all along, but yet the man would have kept it from being so if he had not believed Jesus, and obeyed him as he did. You see he got up promptly and went and did exactly what Jesus told him. If he had been like some men, he would have answered, “Master, it is a great deal of trouble for me to go to Siloam. The

boys will be certain to run after me and make all manner of fun of me as I go feeling my way along with clay daubed all over my eyes. It is crowded now in the city and a man without eyes will have trouble to get along. Will not something else do as well? Can I not sit here and get some one who can see to go to the pool and bring some water and put it on my eyes? If what you wish is that special water of Siloam, why I can send for that; if, however, what you wish is to have the clay washed off which you have put on my eyes, then I can do that by having any water poured on as I sit here. Is it necessary to do exactly what you have said? Will not something else do as well?" What Christ desired was faith and obedience, and nothing else would do at all so long as the man was thinking of what was pleasant and convenient to himself instead of doing just what Jesus said. I hope children, you will all love and trust the Lord so that you will obey Him like this blind man, trying as best you can to do exactly what He tells you in His Word.

Children, we are all born blind. We are born blind on account of the sins of our parents, and so soon as we know anything we go to work to make our blindness worse, to ruin our eyes more and more so as to take away all chance of our ever seeing. Yes, you were born blind, for all that you look at me with such bright eyes. Do you wonder what I mean? Well, you were born blind in the way in which Jesus told the Pharisees they were blind, though they had eyes that could see as well as yours. You were born blind to God and to His law. You think you know what is good? Your parents and teachers have taught you just as a blind boy's father teaches him about the light and about the colors. He says to the boy, This rose is red, and that violet is blue, and the boy learns in that way, but he does not know what color is, though he knows the rose from the violet. I once read of a blind Scotch tailor who could tell with his fingers the difference in the same kind of goods between the different colors, so that he never made a mistake in matching

stripes. And yet he did not know the color. You could not tell a boy who had been blind all his life what red is, could you? You could hand him a rose, an apple, or a piece of cloth, and say this is red, and though he could learn the name and say of each of the objects afterward, "This is red," he could not really know the color. We are just that way about what is good and bad in God's sight, till Christ opens our eyes. Our parents tell us of certain things, "This is right," and "That is wrong," and we learn them so we remember that the one is right and the other wrong, but we do not know what right and wrong themselves are. We may get it so we can tell rightly every time like the Scotch tailor, but we do not really see the good and the evil while we are blind. All we know about it is what we have been taught. The Bible tells us the natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit, because they are spiritually discerned. And we are blind in spirit till our eyes are opened.

Now, remember we are all born blind, and

nobody but Jesus can open our eyes. But I'm afraid many of us are more like the Pharisees than like this blind man who washed in Siloam. We do not realize that we are blind and do not ask Jesus to open our eyes. He comes to us and offers to do it. He even urges us to let our eyes be opened ; but we shake our heads and say, "No, we had rather be blind." Some say, "We would like to see at some time, but do not want our eyes opened now. We like being in the dark. If our eyes were opened we would see how much needs to be done, and we would have to go to work doing good, and so we had rather stay blind. Some of these days we will get you to open our eyes." Suppose that blind man had talked that way to Jesus, would he not have been foolish? Yet is not that the way with every one who puts off being a Christian? Who says, "I mean to give up my sins some day, but there's no need of being in a hurry. I'll have time enough after I get older"? The blind man did not talk to Jesus that way ; did not ask him if he would not come round that way again in a

year and then he would be ready to have his eyes opened, and that would do as well, for a year was not long. Why, such talk as that would have sounded as if the man thought he was doing Jesus a kindness to let him open his eyes, and that it was a hardship to him to be made to see. A year is not very long, but in half a year from that time Jesus was crucified, and when the Feast of Tabernacles came round again that blind man would have listened in vain for the Master's footsteps. He might have been very anxious to see then; he might have waited there day after day till the feast days were all over, but Jesus would not have come to him. He would never have had another chance.

There will come a time, children, if you keep putting Christ off, and saying, "I don't want to be a Christian now," when Jesus will have passed by and no one else can save you, as there was no one else who could open that blind man's eyes. Oh! how terrible, if Jesus should say to any of you as he said to the Pharisees, "Your sin remaineth!" If the

only sin-bearer says that to the soul, is it not fearful?

Now the lessons I wish you to carry home in your hearts to remember and to heed are that we are all born sinners, with blind souls, as this man was born blind, and that no one can take away our sins and make our souls see, except Jesus, who opened that man's eyes. Then we must do just as this blind man did, trust Christ and do just what he tells us, as well as we can. He will open our eyes, if we do this. We shall see how vile sinners and how bad our hearts are, but oh! we shall see how altogether lovely He is! We shall see where His footsteps go, so that we can follow Him, and we shall grow more and more like Him the closer we follow him, till after we die, when we shall see Him as He is, and be like him, and we shall stand "without fault before the Throne." Oh, children! dear children! let Jesus open your eyes!

## II.

### ALL FOR SHOW OR ALL FOR GOD.

---

*They Have Their Reward.*—MATT. VI: 5.

The Pharisees tried to make the people believe they were just the best men in the world. That was their ambition. They wished to hear of people's saying, "That rabbi is so pious; why, he prays more and fasts more and gives more to the poor than anybody else." When the Pharisees went along the streets, they liked to have the little boys turn from their play to look after them because they were so good. One boy would say to another, "Look yonder, quick! There goes Rabbi Ezra—don't you see him?" "Who is Rabbi Ezra?" "And don't you know who Rabbi Ezra is? That's because you don't live in Jerusalem but away off in Capernaum. Why, he is so pious; he is the best man that ever lived since Moses. They



say he prays six hours every day and sometimes he prays all night. He fasts three days in the week and is always giving money to the poor. See that chest there just ahead of him. That's the place where they put money for the poor. It has a mouth like a trumpet and the money rings as it goes down. If you'll listen when Rabbi Ezra gets there, you'll hear his money ring, for he never passes a chest without putting something in it."

The Pharisees liked to have the boys and the grown men talk about them that way, and look at them as they passed down the street and tell how pious they were. They used to take pieces of parchment, which was their writing paper, and write verses of Scripture on them and roll them up in little cases and tie them on their foreheads to make people think they had great respect for the Word of God. It would have been better to have had ✓ the Scriptures inside their heads—don't you think? David did not tie the law of the Lord about his head, but he had it in his heart, so

that when he woke up in the night he would lie there and think about God's Word. Was not that the best way?

The trouble with the Pharisees was that though they tried to make people believe they were the best men in the world, they did not try to *be* the best men. Their religion was all outward show; they did not care how they appeared to God, if they could only make men think they were good. They would have done right to try to seem good, if they had also tried to be good, for we ought to avoid all appearance of evil, and Jesus told us to let our light shine that others might see their good works and glorify our Father who is in Heaven. The Pharisees did very wrong, but they were better than a great many people in this day who abuse them, and even thank God they are not Pharisees. Their ambition was to make men think they were good, but there are men and, what is worse, some boys, who are ambitious for people to think they are bad. They even try to make out that they are worse than they are. They

like to have it known that they chew tobacco, and drink and swear. Boys like to have their schoolmates think they are "smart" in fooling the teacher. They tell bad things they have done, and make them out worse than they really were. Sometimes young men try to make people believe they are twice as much infidels as they really are. They make out they don't believe what the Bible says about Heaven and Hell, but when a man dies that is the last of him, as it is of a dog. There was a young man like this on a ship once, and one day in the cabin, while he was talking like that, a storm struck the ship and it looked as if they were going straight to the bottom of the ocean. The passengers were all frightened, but this young man was worse scared than the rest. He did not wait a minute before he knelt down and prayed to God to have mercy on him and not send his soul to hell. He was not so much of an infidel as he had been making out he was.

It is not right to be a hypocrite either way, that is to try to make out you are different

from what you really are. But if a man is a hypocrite, is it not better for him to make himself out better than he really is, like those old Pharisees did, than to be trying to make people think he is worse than he is, and has done things worse than he ever did do, like some hypocrites these days? Whenever any boy or young man gets to boasting of the bad things he has done, or of how smart he has been in fooling somebody or getting the advantage over people, just think to yourself, "Why, here is a worse Pharisee than the old ones were." He is a hypocrite, you know, and does not tell the truth, for there never was a bragger yet who was truthful. Even the Apostle Peter, when he once undertook to brag, told a lie. He said to Christ, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I," bragging that he would do more than all the rest, and he was the only one who denied his Lord, and he actually swore to make the servant girl believe him when he said he didn't know him and never did know him. It is bad to pretend at all, but it is better to pretend to be

good than to pretend to be bad. Try to be good, not simply to make people think you are so.

The Pharisees had a great way of saying their prayers on the streets. There were certain hours when it was expected that all the Jews would pray. The Pharisees who wished to make people think they were very pious, managed to be walking on the streets when those hours came, and if possible they were on a corner where they could be seen in four directions. Then, when the hour sounded, they would stop, fold their arms, raise their eyes, and begin to pray. There they would sometimes stand for several hours. They had their eyes turned toward heaven, with their faces toward the temple; but they managed to see and hear all that was going on around them. When they heard any one say, "Just see that pious rabbi; he has been standing there praying ever since noon, and it is now four o'clock—what a good man he must be"—they felt proud to think what a reputation they were making. I wonder if any of those

Pharisees, as they stood on the corners praying, ever noticed a young carpenter and a few young fishermen as they passed by. I wonder what they would have said if some one had told them that young carpenter would be known and loved all over the world, long after their names were forgotten, and that men would remember them at all, only because He noticed them and spoke of them? He never stood and prayed on the corners, but if the mountains could have spoken, they could have told of his praying all night out among the trees and the darkness, where no one could see him but God. He never sounded a trumpet before him when he gave alms to the poor, but went about doing good. When he fasted forty days, it was not in the city where everybody could see, but out in the wilderness beyond Jordan, alone.

Jesus said of these Pharisees, "They have their reward." What they were working for was to make people think they were very pious, and they got that. But they got no reward from God. They thought they would

be heard for their much speaking, but God cannot be mocked. Prayers to God and at the people, may reach the people, but they never reach God. Those Pharisees might have pleased God and made the people think they were pious too, if they had only put God first and not thought so much of themselves. God will not be second in anything. If you are thinking of pleasing yourself first and God next, you may have your reward, but you will not please God. If you go to church just because you like to see the people and hear the music, and because the preacher is entertaining, you will have your reward. You will see the people, hear the music and be entertained, but you will not worship God. You will get what you go after, and nothing more. Whereas, if you go because it is right and because you wish to worship God, and hear from the preacher what God says to your soul, then you will be made better, and God will be pleased with you.

There are all sorts of rewards in this world, but the most of them are not worth having.

The Pharisees worked hard for their reward, of making people think they were so good. They really did give a great deal to the poor, which they had to do without, themselves. It was very tiresome standing still so long on the corners of the streets; and they suffered very much from hunger in their many and long fasts. All the reward they got was to make passers by think they were pious. For they could not long deceive those who saw them every day. They would see them the next day "devouring widows' houses," and they would not believe that men who would cheat and rob were good, no matter how long they prayed. And what good would it have done them, if they could have made everybody believe they were pious, when they were not? They could not deceive God, and He is the one who is to judge them at last. But their wish to make people believe them so good, had another wish back of it, which, as you grow older, you will find is back of a great many actions in this world. The Pharisees knew that if they could make the people



think they were very pious that would give them great influence in the country, and great power over the people. That is what bad men are generally after—power over other people. It speaks well for the common people among the Jews in that day that the more pious a man seemed to be the more influence he had. I wish it was so among us to-day. I wish every man who wanted power felt that he must make the people believe him to be a good man who honored God. It might make some hypocrites for men to feel that the only way to get office was to make people think they were good, pious men, but it would be a great deal better for our country.

There are all sorts of rewards before you, children, in the world to-day. Almost anything you set your hearts on while you are young and try your level best to get, you can have, if you live, and keep your health and strength. But you will have to set your whole heart on it, and never forget what you are working for, and never run off for a while after something else. Very few men can get

anything valuable in this world if their heart is divided. Suppose you wish to be a good scholar; you can be, if you go to school regularly and get every lesson thoroughly. You will have your reward, you will be a good scholar in youth, and a highly educated man afterward. But if you study hard one day and are idle the next; if you go to school some days and other days tease your mothers into allowing you to stay at home, then you will never have your reward.

I haven't time to take up all the rewards which are before you, and show you how you can get them if you put all your strength to get them, and to show you which are worth having and which are not, and why they are worth having or not. But you have sense enough to know that no reward is worth striving for with all your heart, unless it is a reward that will last. Anything which death will take from us, in a few years, and which we must do without for eternity, is not worth working very hard for. Suppose you had this world full of fine clothes, what good would they do

you? You would have to die and leave them all, and they would be burned up at the end of the world. Suppose you had a pile of gold as big as the Rocky Mountains? You would have to die and leave it all, and when the world burns up it would be all melted. How foolish it is to set our hearts on anything that can last only till we die! There are a great many rewards in the world, but none of them are worth striving for that will not last forever.

Before we ask what will last forever, let me remind you of one or two advantages you have while you are children, which you will not have when you are grown. You do not know now the awful power there is in habit. You have a great advantage in the fact that you have no bad habits fastened upon you. Therefore you can form good habits more easily than older people. Besides—and you do not know what a blessing this is to you—the cares of the world have not yet got hold of you. They are on your parents and you are free from them. And the cares of this world have such power to seize the whole

heart, even when the man is a good man, that unless he has formed the habit when a child of putting God first in his thoughts, those cares will crowd everything out of his heart. Every good thing you do; everything you do to please God and to show kindness to other people, has a double reward. It has its own reward of pleasing God, it makes it easier for you to do right next time, and it helps to fasten you to the right so that the cares of this world, when they come, will not sweep you away. Why, that is three rewards, isn't it? But remember, the reward of pleasing God is worth more than all the rest. Even Jesus could not have had a better reward for all his toil and suffering than to have his Father say to him—boys, what did God say to him on the mountain? When Jesus went up into the mountain with Peter and James and John and was transfigured, his face shining like the brightest lightning, and when Moses and Elijah came down from heaven and talked to him, you remember a cloud overshadowed them and the disciples were

frightened so they fell down on their faces and were "sore afraid." A voice came out of the cloud which said—what? Can any boy tell me? Yes. Now that was the reward of Jesus when God said to him, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

But while this is the best reward, do not forget that other reward of the advantage of forming the habit of doing right. Every little act, every little word, no matter how little it may seem to you, helps to form the habit of doing right or of doing wrong, and will make a difference in your lives, years after you have forgotten all about it. When I was a little boy, an old preacher whom everybody loved, made a talk to our Sunday school about habit. He said the story of Gulliver was the best illustration he could think of to show the power of every little thing we said or did to bind us fast to the right or to the wrong. The older children had all read the story of Gulliver, but we little ones had not, and so he told us how Gulliver was cast away on a strange coast and,

being tired out with swimming, laid down to sleep. While he was asleep, the pigmies, little people, six inches tall, came down and saw that great monster man asleep on their shore. They wanted to tie him so he could do them no harm, but their ropes were not bigger than fine thread. But thousands of them came and fastened pegs in the ground all around him. Then they tied one of their little ropes to a peg, climbed up on him by their little ladders and let the rope down to others on the other side of him, who caught it and tied it to a peg there. Gulliver was so tired he slept nearly all day, and all those little people worked hard putting thousands on thousands of their little ropes over him everywhere—over his hands, his feet, his neck, his body, till he was fairly covered. When he awoke he was fastened tight. He could not move. He could have broken one of those ropes as easily as you could break a hair; but there were so many thousands fastening him everywhere that he could not break them, no matter how hard he tried. I

had seen a picture of Gulliver fastened down by all those little ropes, and that helped me to remember what the old preacher said. Every little thing you do is like one of those little ropes. By itself it could not hold you, but then you do another and another till after awhile you are fast and cannot change. Now is it not important that all the little things you do should be good things? After that speech of the old preacher at Sunday School, when one of the boys would exaggerate a little, another boy would say, "There's one little rope tying his tongue to falsehood." When one would strike an unkind blow, some one would say, "There's a rope tying his hand to cruelty." It was a good thing for us to think in this way about the habits we were forming. But as I recollect, it was only when one did wrong that we thought about the habit he was forming. If ever one did a kind thing or spoke a brave, truthful word, we never thought to say, "There's a little rope tying him to kindness and truth." I hope you children will remember that part

also. Every time you do a brave, or kind, or honest deed, you have tied yourself to the good by one little rope; as well as tied yourself to evil every time you do wrong. No matter how little the thing may seem to you, it helps fasten you to the right or to the wrong. Please remember this. If you start to say a cross word, or to disobey your parents, or to neglect a lesson, just think, "I am tying myself to sin by one little rope."

It is a grand thing for you to care for the good of others, and while young to try to make others better. This is missionary work, which is the greatest work in the world, trying to make the people of all the earth better. You need to tie your hearts fast to this great work by ten thousand little ropes, and then the world will not be able to tear you away. I have known grown up church members who cared very little for the missionary work, and would give but very little for it. They do not trust their Father in heaven as you trust your fathers. You do not hold on to your dimes and cents and refuse to give



them because you need them to buy clothes and food. You know your fathers will provide those things and you trust them to do it. Did you ever know a boy, with a kind father, to say, "No, I can't spend my money. I must save it up for fear my father will not buy me any clothes or anything to eat, and I must look out for myself." What would you think of a boy who would talk that way, though he had a father not only kind but rich? Of course a poor little orphan who had no father might have to take care of himself. Don't you think there is danger, if people act as if they had no kind Father in heaven, who owns everything, who knows what they need and has promised to take care of them, that when they die He will refuse to acknowledge them, but will say, "Depart from me; I never knew you"?

Every time you do without some candy or a toy to give the money to send the Gospel to the heathen, you tie yourself by one little rope to generosity, to unselfishness, to devotion to Christ. It will be easier for you to

be generous and kindly and unselfish, in every way. Every little rope thus ties you stronger and tighter to these noble qualities. It is being like Jesus to think of others, and to try to do all you can to save them from their sins. It will not be a joy to you after you die to think you have left behind you much property, or a great name; but it will be a joy—oh, such a joy!—if you can meet there souls that have been saved by the Bibles you sent them, or by the missionaries you helped to support. And long after you are dead, souls will still be coming to heaven from those heathen lands, whom you helped to save by sending the Gospel there now. You children like to help grown people. I never saw a child who was not glad to be able to help his father in his work. Now when you do anything for missions, you are really helping in your Heavenly Father's work. It is real help too—not make-believe, just to please you—and it is helping too, in the most important work He is doing in the world. It is so important that He sent His only begotten Son

into the world to suffer and die to carry this work on. Are you not glad you can help God in the great work of saving souls?

The great reward you will get in missionary work, as in all other good work, is that you will please God. There is no reward to be compared to this. Is it not a delight to you to please your earthly fathers? How much more then to please your Father in Heaven. God is pleased whenever you do anything which is kind, or noble, or generous ; whenever you show that you are forgetting yourself and loving others for Jesus' sake. All this mission work is for Jesus' sake, first of all, because Jesus died to save these people and to make them good and holy. Most of the people in heathen lands have a hard time in this world. Some of the countries are so crowded with people that they kill a great many baby girls because they cannot feed all the children, and they care more for the boys than for the girls. I haven't time to tell you of all the ways they suffer, about which you know nothing, but they lead hard, suffering

lives. The only thing which can make them happier in this world, is to teach them to trust Jesus and to love God. And that will not only make them happier here, but will make them happy in heaven. It will make little difference to them if they can be saved, how hungry and sick, and poor and suffering they were in this world. And you can send them the Gospel if you will.

And now before closing I hope you will excuse me for talking to your parents a little. I have a true story I wish to tell them. There is a religious college in this country, a large part of whose students were studying for the ministry. Many of them were very poor and struggling with great hardships to get their education. They were often hungry and cold for want of proper food and clothing. The professors were poor and struggling also, but resolute to give their denomination an educated ministry. One of the professors, when he went to the largest city in that State for help from the churches, always made his home with a certain pious deacon whose

wife was deeply interested in all good works. As she sat at her sewing with her little boys playing in the room or listening quietly to the talk of the professor and their mother, he would tell of the hardships of the students, and the tears would run down the cheeks of the warm-hearted Christian woman. She and her husband did what they could for the cause in which they were interested, but their means were limited. Years afterward at a meeting in behalf of that college, when an urgent appeal was made for money, a business man in the prime of life arose and told how as a child he had seen his mother weep in her loving pity for the struggling students and earnest sympathy for Christ's cause, and added, "I have never forgotten my mother's tears. I will give ninety thousand dollars." Christian mothers, can any of your sons say hereafter of any work for Christ and your fellow men, whether for struggling students or for perishing souls: "I have never forgotten my mother's tears"?

### III.

## WHAT WE WERE AND WHAT WE MAY BE.

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*“ Though ye have lien among the pots yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.”—Ps. LXVIII: 13.*

A traveler in Egypt gives an account of the way the poor people live there which is believed to be what the Psalmist referred to in this text. If you were in Egypt and were to go up stairs to the roof of one of their houses you would see a strange sight. Their houses are flat on top, with a railing around them to keep children from falling off. Often they sleep on the roofs for they are not afraid of being rained on in that country. The roof is the best part of the house to stay in and sleep in after the sun goes down, though in the middle of the day it is very hot.

You would think they would keep the roof

neat and clean, wouldn't you? But if you were to go up on one you would find it all covered with litter. Instead of throwing things into the ash barrel or out in the back yard, they carry broken and useless things up stairs and throw them on the roof. It is a queer notion to take the trouble to carry such things up stairs. If a cup is broken or a frying pan burns through and is of no further use, the woman carries it up stairs and throws it out on the roof. There is no telling how high they would let the roof get piled with such trash, if it were not that the timbers of the house are not very strong, and sometimes there is so much piled up there that the roof is in danger of falling in on their heads. When the woman sees the house is in danger she takes a palm branch for a broom and goes up to have a roof-cleaning, instead of a house-cleaning. She throws the old pots and broken dishes in one corner of the roof and then brushes the other trash which her broom can manage, off the roof. After a while there gets to be a large pile of dirty old pots and pans

and broken things in the corner. You must know their pots are mostly earthenware and not made of iron like ours, and so there are a great many of them broken, and quite a large part of the roof gets covered with them.

There are a great many doves in Egypt. In the heat of the day they like to find a place out of the hot sunshine. There are no shade trees in the streets or along the roads to hide the doves from the sun, so they fly among the pots on the house tops and hide among the pieces. When the sun is setting and its last bright rays, without a cloud to shadow or break them, are falling over the earth, these doves come out from the pots and fly away. They are nearly all white or very light colored, and when the light falls upon them as they are between you and the sun, they look like the brightest silver; and when they are on the other side of you and the sunlight falls on them, they shine more brilliantly than gold. When Miss Whately was in Egypt she says she would sit on the roof when the sun was going down and would watch the doves



coming out from the pots and flying away. When the bright Egyptian sunshine fell on them they shone so they dazzled her eyes. Now, you would think that coming out from such a pile of dirty, old broken pots and dishes the doves would be dirty too. You could not have gone among those pots without getting your hands and faces and clothes so black your mothers would hardly know you. Your white clothes would have been as grimy as the pots. But the doves come out white and clean as they went in. Now, why is this? How can they lie all day among the pots and not be soiled?

Children, almost all of the Old Testament refers first to the Jews as God's chosen people, and then refers to Christians and to everybody. So the Psalmist in this text probably means to make the Jews remember that their fathers were poor and oppressed slaves in the land of Egypt. An Egyptian would have been more unwilling to eat with the Hebrews at table than the white people of the South are to eat with negroes. And they had been

very cruelly treated. They were whipped severely if they did not get a certain amount of work done in making bricks. And you remember what was done for a while to their baby boys. The people in any land who are lowest in position and do the hardest and dirtiest work could well be said to have lain among pots—couldn't they? When this psalm was written, however, Israel was a great nation. David was king, and had conquered and driven off their enemies. They were having good times in Jerusalem and all over their country. They were getting rich and holding up their heads among the nations. David was glad to have them prosperous and successful and happy, but he wanted them not to forget that they owed it all to God. He wished them to remember God had found them among pots and had brought them to all this honor and prosperity in this beautiful land, where no one could look down on them or be cruel to them.

So David reminds them of their hard lot in Egypt. He says to them in substance,

“Now be careful that you are not proud, and think you did all this for yourselves, for you did not. You were there lying among pots in Egypt, poor and friendless, and if you had had no one to help you, you would have been there now. You never could have come away to this land and driven out the people living here, by yourselves. It was God who did it all. He pitied you when He saw you there lying among the pots, and He brought you out and led you through the wilderness, and has made you so prosperous, you are like the dove with “her wings of silver and her feathers of yellow gold.” A great many people are ashamed of the fact that they were once poor and ignorant and try to forget that they have ever been among pots, and to keep other people from finding it out. When they come out as fine as silver and gold can make them, they wish us to think they have always been that fine.

The nations of old always tried to make out that their first founder was a god or at least a demigod, that is, a man who was a son of a

god and much better and stronger than ordinary men. They would never tell that they had been only the poorest servants and lain among pots. When you come to read Homer and Virgil you will find the Greek and Latin poets do not tell the plain truth about their people, and what they were at first, as David does about his people. The first meaning of the text, is then, to remind the Jews of the low state they were in when in Egypt, and to make them think of the love and goodness and power of God, who had done so much for them.

We are not Jews, but it is well for us to think of God's kindness toward them so many hundreds of years ago when they were in Egypt, as well as of His kindness and love to us. But let us now think of what lessons there are for us in this verse about the pots and the doves. Let us ask again—how is it that the doves when they come out from the pots, are so clean and pure? We have all seen how dirty kittens get when they play or sleep where it is dusty or sooty, but the doves come out

from the old pots white, and sail away to shine in the sun as if their wings were of silver and their feathers yellow gold. The dove is a cleanly bird. It loves to be clean. If it feels that there is any dirt on its feathers it flies to where it can find pure water and dips itself in, and then sits in the sun and dresses its feathers. But these doves on the house-tops of Egypt did not often get dirty. If you had put a kitten in the piles of old pots and dishes it would have found the snuggest corner where it would be comfortable, and would have curled itself up there and lain down close against the pots without caring for the dirt, if only it could be comfortable. But the doves will not do that. The doves would find a cleaner place than among the pots if they could, but since they cannot, they make the best of it. They stand upon their feet among the pots, and while hiding under them from the heat they do not touch them any more than they can help. If you could peep under and see them, while they are resting there, you would not see them lying on

their backs or on their sides with their feathers against the dirty pots as kittens or pigs would be, but sitting up daintily on their feet.

The dove is a cleanly bird, and loves to be clean. It is willing to put itself to trouble to keep clean. It would, however, get dirtier than it does if it were not for one thing. Its feathers are anointed with an oil which keeps them not only glossy and beautiful, but which keeps dust and dirt from sticking to them as they would stick to fur. So these are the two reasons why the doves, which cannot help staying in a black place among the pots, can come out and fly away shining in the sun. They are clean birds and touch the pots as little as possible, and never roll in the dirt and dust; and God gives them an unction, that is an oil, which keeps dirt from sticking to their feathers. Of course they do get dirty some, but they never let the dirt stay on them day after day. If when they start out in the evening, one of the doves sees or feels that it has rubbed against a pot and some of its feathers are smutty, it does not fly

up high in the sunshine with the others. It knows where the fountain of pure water is, and it flies there and dips itself in, the first thing it does. It will not rest with stained feathers. If it would, then the next day it would get a little blacker, and the dirtier it got the easier it would be to get more so, for when its feathers are dirty they lose the power to give out the oil which keeps them clean, and after which the dove would be no whiter than a crow. So these are the three reasons why the doves which have lain among pots can come out looking like silver in the sunshine—they love to be clean and touch the dusty things as little as possible; they have an oil God has given them, which keeps the dirt from sticking easily to their feathers, and if a little smut does get on them they fly right off to the fountain and wash it off.

What then, does this verse about the doves teach us? The first lesson is that we can keep pure and holy in the midst of evil things if we love to be holy, as the dove loves to be clean. This is a sinful world, and there are all kinds

of wickedness in it. There is no place where we can go, and nothing which we can do that will keep us from seeing sin and hearing it. Paul says if we wish to have nothing to do with evil doers we must needs go out of the world. The contagion is in the air we breathe. Now, what do people do who must be where the air is bad? If a man must live where there is what the doctors call malaria, what does he do? He cannot find any fans that will keep the malaria away, and he cannot find anything to wrap up in that will kill it. He has to keep himself well and strong so that his health will resist the bad air, and he has to take medicine to take the poison out of his blood. That is all we can do in this wicked world. For the world is wicked, children, and loves God no better now than ever, and we have to live right here in the midst of the wickedness. Your parents cannot put you in glass cases and keep you from all harm that way. The only thing is for you to love goodness like the doves love cleanliness.

The doves could not find any cleaner or



better place where they could be out of the heat in the daytime, or we may be sure they would have done it. And when they were among the pots they kept as far from the dirt as they could. They felt that their true place was flying in the sunshine away up in the air, and they kept themselves clean for that. They never loved the pots, nor thought of them as their home. Now, that is the way you must live in this world. Get in as clean a part of it as you can. Take those persons for your friends who are the best you can get with and with whom it will be easiest for you to do right yourselves. Do not think you can make a bad boy or a selfish girl good by being with him or with her. They will make you bad, and you will not do them any good. The doves could not have made the pots clean by rubbing up against them. They would only have made their own feathers black. The only things you can do for the boy or girl who lies, or cheats, or swears, or is cruel, or is impudent to parents or teachers, are to pray to God to make them better, ask others

to pray for them, and invite them to listen to the preaching of the Gospel. You must never think a thing is "smart" and laugh at it when it is bad; that is to rub yourselves against the pots. There is nothing great in wickedness—the devil is smarter than all the bad men in the world—yet who admires the devil because he is smart? and who wishes to be like him?

The dove loves to be clean; it cannot bear to be dirty. It does not try to keep clean because it is afraid it will be hurt if it is dirty, or because the other doves will not think as much of it as if it is clean. The dove does not think, "I love the pots and I would love to rub against them and lie down in the dirty places like the kittens do. But if I get dirty the master of the house will shoot me, and so I must keep clean though I'd like to be dirty much better." Now, if a bird could talk and should talk in that way you would know right off that it was not a dove, no matter how much it looked like one; for doves love to keep clean, and cannot bear to get their

feathers all dirty. If you hear somebody who professes to be a Christian say, "I think it is hard a Christian can't drink liquor and play cards, and dance and go to theaters, and do whatever other people do on Sundays, and I would love to do just like those who have no religion, only I am afraid the church will take the matter up, or I may be lost at last"—what would you think of such a Christian? Would you think he loved holiness? Would you think he was trying to be as near to Jesus as possible, and to honor God? Suppose a dove should say, "I can rub up against the pots and get as black as I please, and yet be a dove"? Would that be any worse than for a man or woman to say, "I can be as worldly as I please, and think only of how I can have a good time and still get to heaven"? Now, children, I hope you will remember this, even if you forget all else I've said. Just as a dove tries to keep clean because it loves to be clean, so a true Christian tries to be holy because he loves to be holy, and cannot bear to be sinful.

It is the duty of your parents—a duty

solemn and awful with eternity resting upon it—to teach you, while they stand between you and the evil influences of the world, to love what is pure and true and unselfish and godly. They must teach you not to think of yourselves nor whether you are having a good time, nor whether you are “getting on in the world,” but to think of keeping pure and pleasing God. It makes little difference to you whether you get on in the world or not. Heaven is just as near from a cottage as from a palace. I wish you to feel while you are children how ridiculous it is for you or anybody to care about high position in this world more than about what sort of people you are. The world is like the pile of old broken pots in the corner of the house-top there in Egypt where the doves rest till the time comes for them to fly away toward heaven. What the doves care for is to find a sheltered place among the pots where they can be the cleanest. If one dove gets on a high part of the pile and another is down lower, the dove that is higher does not put

on airs and think it is either better, or better off than the one below. It does not care whether it is higher or lower on the pile; what it desires is a place out of the heat, where it can keep cleanest. What difference would it make to the dove whether the piece of pot over him was at the top of the pile or not? Where they are among the pots is something the doves do not care for at all, but only which will be the cleanest at sunset when they fly away, which will have the least of the smut of the pots upon their wings. Believe me, children, when you fly away at death it will make as little difference whether you were high or low in the world, whether you were rich or poor, famous or obscure, as it does to the dove whether it was high or low on the pile of broken pots. But it makes far more difference to you whether you are pure and holy than it makes to the doves whether they are clean or not. This is the lesson I pray God your parents will have grace to teach you thoroughly while you are in their hands ere the world gets hold of your lives.

The doves have to think of all their feathers as they stand among the pots. We can imagine that they try to help each other keep clean, that one above will say to another, "Be careful, your right wing is against that sooty place." They do not try merely to keep their heads clean or their breasts, but all parts of their bodies. Now, you will have to be careful to keep all your natures clean, and to do that you will have to watch carefully. Just as sure as you forget, you will get into sin somewhere. I have heard one man say, "Well, if I do drink no one can say I have been dishonest;" and another say, "I know I swear, but I do not tell lies like some other people I know." Would it not be silly for a dove to say, "My right wing is grimy, but my left is clean"? or, "I know my breast is dirty, but it is not as black as that dove's head yonder"? You must keep clean in all ways, and not think that because you are clean in one place you are to be excused for being dirty somewhere else, that because you are honest, for example, that makes up for your

being selfish. You must be pure in all parts of your daily lives; so only can you be like the doves, and when you fly away from earth your wings will be like silver and your feathers like yellow gold.

One great temptation which Satan will bring against you when you go out into the world; nay, which he brings against you now in your little lives, is that you cannot help doing wrong. He will tell you that you must do this thing which you know is not right, because everybody does it, and you cannot get along if you do not. He will try to get you to do everything the world does in the way of amusements, by telling you you cannot be "in society" if you do not, and you have a right to have a good time while you are young. I do not believe Jesus was "in society," do you? I do not believe if Pilate ever gave a ball that John and Peter were invited, do you? Do you suppose they cared? Do you suppose they would have gone if Pilate had invited them? Don't you know they cared more for each other's company

and above all for that of Jesus, than for all they might have seen in Pilate's palace? But it is not true that you are obliged to do wrong—that you cannot live in the world and keep yourself from evil. Satan, the Bible says, is the father of liars, and it is one of his pet falsehoods that you are obliged to get yourself dirty among the world's pots. This text reminds us that we can live pure and noble lives, thinking of God rather than of ourselves, and loving Jesus instead of our own pleasure. How grateful we ought to be to God that we can, by His grace, do this, for we could not do it without His help.

We must be made like doves by the Holy Spirit regenerating our hearts. A dove is clean by nature, but we are not. We naturally love the blackness of sin, and would rather be evil than pure. But if we repent of our sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will create new hearts within us which will love holiness as a dove loves cleanliness. And the Holy Spirit will give us an unction from on high which will



keep evil from sticking to us; as the doves have an unction or oil on their feathers which keeps them glossy and bright, and makes the dust shake off from them as it will not do from the fur of other creatures. Without that unction the doves might love to be clean as much as they do now, but they could not keep the dust from sticking to them when they were among the pots. It is only when Christians have the Holy Spirit's influence that they can be in the world and not of the world. That will keep them from loving themselves and loving money and thinking more of having a good time in the world than of pleasing God. There is not anything which will take the place of this unction of the Holy Spirit. You may make good resolutions, and you ought to make them, and, what is more, to keep them too; but all your resolutions and all your efforts will not keep you from getting grimy from the world's sin, without the Holy Spirit. But he will not be with you unless you love God better than you

love the world, and are more anxious to please Him than to have your own way.

I told you a while ago that the dove could not bear even a little dirt. If it rubbed against the pots and soiled its feathers only a little, it did not think—"Oh! that is so little, it makes no difference, I will not bother about that now but will wait till it gets dirtier, and then I'll wash it all off." When it comes out and sees the dirt, it flies right off to the fountain—and there is one in most of the squares or large yards in Alexandria—dips itself in and then sits somewhere in the sun and dresses its feathers with its bill till they are all right once more, and the oil which keeps them glossy is out upon them. The dove will not stop for anything else till it has done this. It may be hungry but its supper must wait till it is clean. Our Lord tells us to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves," and I think the doves are wiser than we as well as more innocent. We have a fountain in which we can wash away our sins; it is the

\* \* "fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

And whenever any of us who have been washed from our sins and made Christians, find that we have gotten some of the world's dirt on us, we must not think it is only a little or will not show much, or everybody else has as much as that, or we are too busy now, but will attend to it after a while; but must go right away, as the doves do, and wash it off. Have you done something wrong? Then go tell it to God in prayer, ask Him to forgive you for Jesus' sake, and keep you from doing it again. Do not let the doves love to be clean more than you love to be holy.

“Though ye have lien among pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.” It does not make any difference to us where we have been in this world if only we have been pure and holy there. God is not ashamed of His children because they have been among pots. He does not care for that but for how clean they are. You can walk in the midst of this wicked world and yet keep your lives spotless; but you cannot do this if you love

the world. The doves do not love the broken pots, still less the dust on them. What they love is the flying into the clear sky in the calm of the evening with the sunshine on their wings. You cannot live spotless lives and love yourselves or your own pleasure or your own interests more than you love God. Jesus says you must "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." If you will do this, how beautiful you will be when the evening of your life has come, and you fly away into eternity. Not one of you will love to be holy unless God forgives your sins and makes you a new creature. No matter how carefully your parents have trained you, your heart will still love sin and darkness unless it is washed in the blood of Jesus.

#### IV.

### A QUESTION FOR YOU TO ANSWER.

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*“What manner of child shall this be?”*—LUKE  
I: 66.

The Jews always named their boys when they were eight days old, but they left their little girls without a name till they were more than a year old. When John the Baptist was eight days old, all the friends and relations gathered to rejoice with the father and mother, and to express their opinions about the little boy and the name he should have. There was a large gathering of the relations this time, for this was the only child of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and they were getting old. So all their friends came together at their house. First, they handed the baby around, and everybody said what a beautiful child he was, as they always say about every baby, and they tried to decide whom he looked most like. One

said he was the image of his father, another that he had eyes just like his mother, and still another could not see how they thought so, for he was exactly like his grandfather. Then they thought about the name the child should have.

I think there was a good deal of disputing among the cousins and neighbors over that name. It seems strange that they did not ask the father and mother at first, for surely we would think they ought to decide what their child should be named. But the father was dumb, and had been so for a long time. It was nearly a year since, one day after he had been a long while in the temple, for he was a priest, he came out and had to make signs to the people, because he could not speak to them. He had talked well enough when he went into the temple and had never been dumb before, but when he came out he couldn't say a word and had not spoken since. Perhaps that was the reason the relatives did not say anything to Zacharias, but went ahead and named the baby for themselves. Now,

the Jews almost always named their children after somebody that was kin to them. They liked to keep up the same name in their families. But they did not call their sons after their fathers, they thought it looked better to honor some one else with a namesake, than to call their sons by their own names. But for some reason these kinsfolk named this baby Zacharias, after his father, thinking the parents would like it even though they would not have thought it looked well to give a baby its father's name.

Or, it may be, the relations wanted to honor Zacharias because they felt so sorry that he was dumb and so could never talk to his little boy. But the Bible does not tell us why they called the child after its father, when the Jews rarely did such a thing, but only that the neighbors and relations gave it that name. Then they went and told the mother they had named the child Zacharias. But Elizabeth said, "Not so, but he shall be called John." "John?" They were amazed. What had possessed her to give the child that name?

Perhaps she thought it was bad taste to call the child after its father, but where did she get the name John? "Why," said the other, "that name was never in the family on either side—what can be the matter with Elizabeth? John, indeed!" Then, as the mother would not agree to another name, they said, "Let us tell Zacharias, and see what he thinks his child should be named; he may not call it Zacharias, but he will give it some good old family name." They went and made signs to the father, what the child's name should be. He motioned for them to give him a writing tablet, and he wrote "His name is John."

They were more amazed than ever. "I never heard of such a thing in my life," said one. "Why, they haven't a single relation in the world by that name," said another. All agreed that it was very strange that father and mother should both have said the boy's name was John. While they were wondering and talking, all at once, they heard Zacharias' voice, and there he sat, no longer dumb, but talking as well as he had ever talked in his



life. And the first thing he said after being dumb so long was to praise God. Do you wonder, children, that when they heard the dumb man speaking, that the Bible says: "Fear came on all them that dwelt round about them"? For he could now tell how he came to be dumb. The angel Gabriel had come into the temple and stood by the altar of incense while Zacharias was attending to his duties as priest, and told him that he should have a son, and that his son's name should be John. And because Zacharias did not believe the angel but wanted some proof that he was telling the truth, Gabriel gave him the proof. Just think of a man's asking an angel for proof. He said, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God," as if he said—"Do you think one who stands in that presence could tell a lie?" Then he told him that he should be dumb till the child was born. That was proof enough, but it was not such proof as Zacharias would have liked. When we refuse to believe God and ask Him for proof, we are apt to get such proof as we

do not like, though it cures us of our unbelief.

When Zacharias told them how the angel had said the baby's name must be John, they had no more to say; but they were afraid, and went home and told everybody what strange things had happened. It was not long till all the people in the hill country of Judea had heard of this baby the angel had named John, and no wonder they asked, "What manner of child shall this be?" So the little John grew up in his father's house till he went out in the desert to stay till the time came for him to preach to the people about Jesus Christ. We know very little about John's childhood, but we know what manner of child he was, from what he was as a man. He was an unselfish child because he was an unselfish man. For there is a great truth, children, in that old saying: "As the twig is bent the tree's inclined." You cannot be selfish children, thinking of your pleasure and wishing to have your own way in everything; you cannot be quarrelsome and cross, greedy and fault-finding and expect that growing up will

make you kind and polite, unselfish and amiable. You cannot be tricky, deceiving your parents and telling what is not true, while you are children, and think that because you will be men and women you will be honest and truthful and honorable.

But I do not intend this morning to tell you what sort of a child John the Baptist was, but to talk about what manner of children you shall be. This question is asked over the head of every baby—"What manner of child shall this be?" And what manner of man or woman shall this child be? It brings a feeling of awe over grown people as they look at little children and wonder what they will make as they grow older. Babies are so much alike. If we had seen John the Baptist and Judas Iscariot when they were babies, we could not have told which would have been the holy man and which the traitor. They were both innocent and helpless, both looking up with wondering eyes as babies do, both bright and cooing, as babies are. Yet these two babies, John and Judas, and they

must have been babies about the same time, so innocent and sweet in their infancy, grew up so different that Christ said of one: "There has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist," and of the other—"Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

A painter once painted a beautiful child standing by its mother's knee. Its cheek was rosy with health and its beautiful blue eyes were raised in love to its mother's face. When he had finished the picture, he hung it in his studio and named it "Innocence." Hundreds of people came year by year to see and admire the beautiful picture with its pure face and innocent eyes. After a long time the painter thought he would paint a picture of "Guilt" to hang beside that of "Innocence," to let the people see the difference. He looked everywhere to find a face wicked enough, and he looked a long time without finding one to suit him. You see there wasn't any badness in the child's bright and pure little face, and he wanted to get the worst possible face to contrast with it. After awhile

one of his friends, who knew what he wanted, came to him and said—"I have found the very face you want, for there could not be a worse one. It is the face of a murderer in prison, condemned to die; come and see it." He went and found the murderer chained to the floor in a damp dungeon. His face was so marked with vice it was hideous, his eyes were bloodshot and fierce, and he was tugging at his chain and cursing so dreadfully that it made the old painter sick.

This was the very face he wanted, so he painted it and hung it in his studio by the side of the innocent child. When the people came in they looked with a shudder at the picture of "Guilt," and talked of the difference between it and "Innocence." Could there be a greater contrast than between the beautiful young face with its eyes shining with innocent love, and the bloated evil face of the murderer? But when the painter inquired at the prison for the name of the wicked wretch whose picture he had painted, they told him "Rupert." The old painter staggered back

with a look of horror—saying, “It cannot be, oh! it cannot be! That was the name of the child I painted for Innocence. It cannot be the same.” But it was the same. The beautiful child had grown into this lost and guilty man. Those mild and innocent eyes were the same as the fierce, bloodshot ones. Bad company had led young Rupert into sin, and that was the result.

Is it not terrible to think what manner of men these innocent babes grow up to make? All just alike so far as we can see, all innocent in their cradles, yet some growing up into blessings, and others into curses to the world. And as I look into these bright, glowing faces before me to-day, the question they asked about John the Baptist comes to me: “What manner of children shall these be?” Many people are asking that question about you children. Your parents are asking it anxiously, for they love you so dearly and feel that so much depends on them. They take such pains with you. How much time and care and love and money and prayer they

spend for you, that you may grow up healthy and talented and good! They know that what manner of children you shall be depends on them more than on any one else. If they teach you to be obedient when you are small, then when you grow up you will be ready to obey the laws of the State and the laws of God. If they train you in good habits, those good habits will remain with you after you are men and women. Children, do you ever stop and think how much trouble you are to your parents? Notice your mother this week and see how much of her time she is planning and arranging and doing something for you. Your parents have a right to ask of you to grow up noble men and women in return for their love and care.

Your Sunday-school teachers ask the question—"What manner of children shall these be?" They try so hard to teach you to be good and make you love your Bible, which will train you into grand characters if you will read and study and live up to the commandments. How anxiously these teachers

watch you and pray for you, as you grow older, to see if you are heeding their words and trying to be Christians. The church also asks—"What manner of children shall these be?" They are praying for your salvation and looking for you to be converted, and then come into the church and work for Jesus. Will these boys be regular at prayer meetings, ready to pray and praise God, or will they neglect the church and care nothing for religion? Will they wish people in the world saved and be eager to send missionaries to the heathen, or will they care only for cigars, horses and drinks? The churches are asking anxiously and prayerfully, "What manner of children shall these be?"

Your country also asks this question, my children, and asks it with earnest interest. Will these children grow up into good and truthful and honest citizens? The country says—"I have so many rascals, so many that will lie and cheat and steal and gamble and drink, that I do not know what to do with them all. The jails and prisons are full, and



yet there is so much wickedness going on all the time. I want good people so much; I want these children to grow up so honorable that everybody can trust them, so truthful that they would rather die than tell a lie, and so honest that I will not hear any more of forgeries and embezzlements nor of cashiers running off with other people's money. I want them to grow up teetotalers, for I am crushed down by drunkenness. I want them to be brave men and women so they will not be afraid to do right. I want them to be kind hearted and wide awake to help others to keep out of temptation." That is the way the country talks when speaking about the children. She needs good men so badly, she has so many bad men now. No wonder the country is anxious to know, "What manner of children these shall be?"

Just think how many are asking this question about you. Your parents, your teachers, the churches and the whole country are all watching and hoping that you will grow up good and true—will you disappoint them all?

I do not believe that there are any boys or girls here who will feel that they do not care what they grow up to be, when so many are caring for them. But there is one who cares more for you than all of these, one who loves you better than even your mother, and who is looking down on you to see what manner of children you will be. You know who that is; you know who loves you better than father, mother, sister and brother, who is most grieved when you do wrong, and who died in your place, because you deserved to die, and He loved you so well. He died to save your soul. He cares what manner of children you are; then how much ought you to care for yourselves? Will you not say, "If Jesus will help me I will be such a child as my parents, my teachers, my church, my country and my Saviour wish me to be? I will be a blessing, and try to make the world better; there are too many in it now trying to make it bad"?

It does not depend simply on you what you shall be. Your parents deserve much of the

praise or of the blame. If they have been good men and women and given you right training it will be far easier for you to keep from vices. "But doesn't it depend on Christ and the Holy Spirit?" you ask. Yes, it depends entirely on them, but they are always ready, always willing and always anxious to help you, if you pray to them. If you will be sorry for your bad heart and go to Jesus and ask Him to give you a new heart, He will do so and will help you to be such a child as will grow up to be a noble Christian. It is very important for you to think about what manner of children you will be. In a few years you will be grown people and those who are now grown will be dead. If you are bad, what will become of the world? If the children who are trained in Sunday-school and reared by Christian parents do not make good people, where will the good ones come from? Can we expect boys who have bad fathers, and who have broken the Sabbath, cursed, lied and gambled all their lives to make good men, if the Sunday-school boys make bad men?

“What manner of children shall these be?” Let me now tell you of some of the things you need to do in order to grow up noble men and women. You must be truthful. You cannot be of much account in the world if you are not truthful, and in the world to come, God has said: “All liars shall have their portion in the lake burning with fire and brimstone.” I heard an old teacher once say, however bad children were he felt something good could be made out of them so long as they were truthful, but when they began to deceive, then he gave up in despair, for in a confirmed liar’s character there is nothing solid to build on. And remember, that to be truthful includes keeping your promise in school. Once there was a boy named John; he was truth itself. That “John said so,” was enough for any of the boys to know a thing was exactly true. One of his schoolmates told a boy that John had promised to bring him a ball the next day, and the boy said, “Maybe he won’t do it.” The other boy answered, “John not do it! you don’t know

anything about John ; I'd believe him sooner, yes, twice as soon as I'd believe George Washington." You know from that how all the boys honored and respected John, and what sort of a man he became.

Be truthful, and then be brave. You cannot well be truthful unless you are brave. You will be telling lies because you are afraid of people, afraid they will make fun of you or punish you. A boy who is not brave has a hard time in this world, and cannot do much in it. But to be brave does not mean to fight. A boy who fights because another boy has dared him to, or because somebody will say he is afraid, is a coward. Rowdies fight, but gentlemen and Christians never do unless it is to protect some one from harm. John the Baptist was one of the bravest men that ever lived, and yet we do not hear of his ever having a single fight. He was not afraid of the wild beasts in the desert. He was not afraid of the soldiers, but told them plainly what they must do. He was not afraid of wicked King Herod, but told him of his sins

as plainly as if he had been a common man. And when the wicked king ordered him to be killed to please a wickeder woman, John was not afraid to die. How brave he was all through his life!

You must be brave while you are young by not being afraid to do right, because some one will get angry at you or make fun of you. Do not be afraid of anybody but God, nor of doing anything except what is wrong. Thus you will grow up to be brave men and women, such as the country needs, and the churches need.

First be truthful, then be brave, and thirdly do with your might whatever you do. If you jump, jump your best, if you run, run your fastest. When you are doing one thing, do not be wishing you were doing something else. When you play one thing, do not be wishing you were playing something else; you will not have as much fun at that rate. When you study, study hard, and do not be thinking about your play. Get every lesson well. If you wish to be of any account in

this world you must learn to do your best in everything. At day school and Sunday-school make up your minds that you will always have perfect lessons. You will learn fast that way, and what is better, you will get the habit of doing things as they ought to be done; and when you are grown your work will always be the best, and then you can always find work to do, and will enjoy doing it. When you grow up you will find there is ever so much more pleasure in work than there is in play, if only you work well. I never see a boy half doing anything, that I do not think—"Poor fellow, what an unpleasant life you will have."

Be truthful, be brave, do with all your might whatever you do; these are three things, and I will tell you of but one more, and that is the most important of all. Try to be like Jesus. He "pleased not himself." Do not be thinking about your own way and what you want, but be always trying to please some one else. At home try to please your parents; at school try to please your teachers;

at play try to make the other boys and girls have a good time. Now would not a boy or girl who always did these things be splendid? Who was truthful, always brave, always did everything the best he could, and was always trying to make others happy—wouldn't he be splendid? Wouldn't he be happy himself? Everybody would love him, his parents and teachers would be proud of him, and he would grow up to be such a man as God wants to glorify him in this world. Will you try boys and girls, to be these four things, truthful, brave, thorough and unselfish? Then you must not depend on your own strength, but must repent of your sins, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and pray for the Holy Spirit to make you what you ought to be. May God bless you, every one.



v.

A GRAND EXAMPLE.

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*"And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did."*—II KINGS, XVIII, 3.

For more than three years there had been neither rain nor dew in the land of Israel, and it had not rained in some of the other countries as we know, because the famine was in the region of Sidon, for the widow who fed Elijah, lived there. Think of it—no rain for more than three years! Why, if it does not rain in six weeks, how brown and dry the grass gets, and how the farmers groan over their crops. But these farmers had had no crops at all for three years. The creeks were all dried up and the rivers were very low. The horses and the cows were dying not only for want of grass, but for lack of water as well. "Why didn't they pray to the

Lord for rain?" a little boy asked when this was his Sunday school lesson. But that was the trouble. They would not pray to the Lord. They were worshiping idols which could not hear their prayers.

The people of Israel had had a very wicked king named Omri. He was a bold, bad man. He was a brave soldier, but God never praises a bad man because he is brave and it is wrong for us to do so. Omri was worse than all the kings that were before him, the Bible tells us, though he made his kingdom strong and built a large beautiful city for his capital. When he died his son Ahab came to the throne. In some things Ahab seems to have been a better man than his father; perhaps he had a good mother who tried to teach him rightly. Yet though he was a better man in some things and might have done very well if he had had good people around him, Ahab proved to be much worse than his bad father. For while Omri was a bad man he was a strong and brave one, so he was never any worse than he wished to be. No bad companions could

make him do what in his heart he hated to do. He worshiped the golden calves, but he did not worship Baal. There was a difference between worshiping the calves and worshipping Baal. The calves were meant as symbols of God, and when the people bowed down before the calves they professed to be bowing before the Lord. The calves were like the images the Roman Catholics bow down to. They say they worship the image only as a symbol of Christ. That was exactly what was said of Jeroboam's calves. But Baal was a regular idol like the idols of the heathen to-day. The calf worship was wrong, but it was not so bad as the Baal worship.

Now Omri worshiped the calves for he did not care to please God, but he did not build temples to the heathen gods of the nations around. But when Ahab came to be king, he did not stop with the calves. If his wife had been a good woman he would probably never have done any worse than his father, and perhaps he would have done better. But Ahab was a weak man, easily influenced by any one

who once got control of him. Although God had forbidden marriages between the Israelites and the other nations, Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Zidonians. It was no doubt considered a great match for the young king, because her father's kingdom was very powerful and wealthy, and Jezebel was a very beautiful and a very brilliant young lady. But Ahab would have much better tied a millstone about his neck and jumped into the sea than to have married her.

Jezebel was afraid of nothing. She had a much stronger character than Ahab, and she ruled him in almost everything. He showed some good sense, however, in refusing to allow her to hurt his good governor, Obadiah. But she got Ahab to worship Baal and the other idols of her country. It had been a long time since the children of Israel had gone into idolatry this way, not since the time of Samuel, at least, for although Solomon in his silly old age had worshiped idols the people continued to worship the Lord God. In the old times when the Israelites

practiced idolatry they were punished by their enemies overrunning their country, burning their cities, seizing their cattle and crops. But now God punished them by not letting it rain for more than three years. They knew this came from God. They had a well watered country and had had rain in abundance. So when it was dry so long, they were bound to know God did it, for nothing else could have done it, and that was just what the stern old prophet of God had said before the drouth came: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain three years, but according to my word."

Ahab was not so bad that he could see the suffering of the people without being sorry. But instead of being sorry for his sins and burning up the idols, and driving the priests of Baal back to Sidon, he was angry at Elijah who told him of the drouth. Do you think Ahab is the only one who was ever angry at those who told him of his sin, and that he would be punished for it? Did you ever

know of any one who got angry on being told of wrong doing? Did you? Ahab was so angry he determined to kill Elijah, but he could not find him. Besides being so wicked, what a fool the king was to try and kill the prophet! It would never rain but at Elijah's word, and if he was killed it would never rain at all, and the land would become a great desert, like Sahara, where it never rains. Angry people generally make fools of themselves in some way, and Ahab was so busy trying to get his revenge on Elijah that he did not think of the consequences. So he hunted all over his kingdom for the prophet and, unable to find him, sent to the kingdom of Judah, telling the king to send Elijah or Judah should be made to suffer. The king of Judah answered that he had not seen Elijah nor, so far as could be found out, had any of the people seen him. Ahab was not satisfied with that, and made the king swear Elijah was not in his kingdom. Then all the other kings around were likewise made to swear that Elijah was not in their kingdom. Even in

Sidon where Jezebel's father reigned and which was the very country this Baal worship came from, Ahab had sent for Elijah. Old Ethbaal answered angrily that he had nothing to do with prophets of Jehovah; what was his son-in-law bothering him for? His country was suffering from the drouth too, and if Elijah was at the bottom of it and he could get his hands on him, he would make short work with him. But Ethbaal questioned all his officers and noblemen and none of them knew anything of such a man as Ahab was talking about. But there was a poor widow there in his kingdom who could have told something about Elijah. No one asked her, however, and we may be sure she would not have told even if the king had threatened to kill her.

Ahab could not find Elijah to kill him, and the drouth kept getting worse and worse. Day after day the sun arose without a cloud, and night after night every star shone clear through the dry air. There was death among the poor, many were fleeing to other lands,

and the cattle were dying. Still Ahab, urged on by his wicked wife, would not repent and destroy his idols. He must do something. Every now and then the men in charge of his cattle came and told him another river had dried up, and the pastures along the banks were dry and bare of grass as a road. All the people in the East knew how to water their fields from the rivers when it does not rain, but when the rivers dried up, they must cease. Besides, you must know they had no big rivers like the Ohio, in the land of Ahab. The Jordan was their largest river and it was not wider than this church is long. So the king called the governor of his house and said to him in substance: "Obadiah, there's no use in trying to catch that old Elijah. If he is not dead he is in some far off country where he can't be found. Now we must do something quick or all the horses and cattle will be dead. We will divide the country and you look for water and grass in half of it while I look over the other half." Obadiah agreed and set out immediately on his work. They did not go



about like servants, they went in chariots, looking to find swampy places where grass might still be growing, and streams which had water enough to water pastures. Every one of these places they would mark down carefully, and afterward send servants to take the cattle there. It required such care that Ahab could trust nobody to attend to it but himself and Obadiah.

And it is about Obadiah that I wish to talk to you particularly. I have said all this about the wicked king, the wicked queen and the dreadful famine in order that you might better understand how thoroughly good Obadiah was. While Ahab was hunting everywhere for Elijah to kill him, Jezebel was not idle. She tried to make the people believe that God and those who worship Him were to blame for all this trouble. She would tell them this is all the doings of your God, Jehovah, whom you pretend to think is so powerful, and about whom you tell such big stories of things he did ages ago. Baal never treats his people so, and it is because so many

are left to worship Jehovah that Baal will not protect you. Come and let us kill them all, and we will have no farther trouble. Many of the Israelites were fools enough to believe her, and to help her kill all who would not worship idols. But there was one man right there in the palace, the man who had charge of the king's household, and of well nigh everything in the kingdom, who worshiped God and made no secret of it, and the queen could neither coax nor threaten him into worshipping Baal. He was not given to talking much and did not feel called on to denounce the king like Elijah, but he made no secret of his religion. When Jezebel was having many of the servants of God killed, Obadiah took one hundred prophets, and hid them where she could not find them, and there he fed them. These were not prophets like Elijah who could work miracles or tell what was going to be in the future, but they were like the preachers to-day, and spent their time telling the people what God required them to do. Very likely the queen knew what Obadiah

had done, for he speaks to Elijah about it as if it were generally known, and there are always plenty of bad people who are envious of the good, and ready to tell whatever will hurt them.

Jezebel could not make Obadiah tell where the prophets were. He was not afraid of her, even if she was queen. He knew how she ruled her husband and what a cruel woman she was, but he knew God would protect him from her if it was best for him to live, and if God allowed her to have him killed, he would go to heaven, where he would not be troubled by seeing so much wickedness any longer. A woman like Jezebel is more dangerous than a hungry lion, but Obadiah was no more afraid of her than Daniel was afraid of the lions. Jezebel could not do anything with Ahab when she attacked him about Obadiah. He was a weak, henpecked man, led by his wife into all sorts of awful sins, but when she wished to have Obadiah killed Ahab told her flatly he would not allow it. God was guarding His faithful servant, and would not suffer

a hair of his head to be touched. But Ahab did not know that; he did not protect Obadiah to please God, but for his own reasons. Obadiah was a faithful officer. He was perfectly honest; the king could trust him with all his treasures, uncounted. He was a very fine officer; nobody else could do his duties half so well. Because he was so open and honest about his religion and never tried to flatter the king by worshiping Baal, or trying to hide his religion, Ahab knew he was frank and honest about everything. He knew there was no treachery or trickery in Obadiah, and that this good man would never try to deceive him.

Bad men cannot trust other bad men. They hate good men because their consciences show them what a difference there is between themselves and good men. Ahab's conscience probably said to him, "Just look at Obadiah! See how brave and good he is. He is not afraid of Jezebel. He goes right on and does not stop for all her crying and threats. And he does not know that she will not succeed in

getting you to kill him, but he goes on doing right and is not afraid. Are you not ashamed of yourself to give up to her so? You know all this trouble came because you went to worshiping Baal to please her. If *you* had only been true like Obadiah, all this famine would not have come." When his conscience said this to him Ahab fairly hated the sight of the good governor, for it made the king feel how bad he himself was. But that did not make him willing to have Obadiah killed, for he could not find another such an officer among the worshipers of Baal. To be thoroughly good is the way to be trusted, and we all like to be trusted. It is pleasant to know that people around us think we can be depended upon in everything. But in order that they may trust us they must see that we are thoroughly good all the time. It will not do to do wrong only once and hope it will not be found out. If we do wrong once, we kill trust; for people will not know when we will do so again. If you tell the truth a hundred times and tell one lie, people will not

believe you. If Obadiah had stolen once, Ahab would never had any confidence in him afterward. Remember then, that no one who is not good can be trusted. Even the bad people trust the good.

It is also true that good people stand up for each other. Bad people do that too sometimes, but only when they think some harm will come to them if they do not. A bad man or boy thinks of himself first, while a good man can be trusted to help others, however much trouble it may involve. Had Obadiah been selfish he would have said to himself, "I do enough if I worship God myself, and refuse to serve Baal. That makes the queen and all the court angry with me. If I do that and do my best to be a good officer, it is all I can do." But he did not talk in that cold-blooded, selfish way, when Jezebel was killing the servants of God. He took one hundred of them, hid them in two caves and fed them himself. The times were very hard, harder than we can form any idea of, and to feed a hundred men cost Obadiah a great

deal. But he did not stop for the cost. So long as he had anything, he would feed these good men, who were in need. He was so brave he was not afraid of being killed because he took care of God's servants, and yet he was all the time in great danger of being killed. Why, this same queen Jezebel once frightened even the great prophet Elijah, so that he ran away ; but she never frightened Obadiah into giving up his care of those men he had hidden. Wasn't it noble in Obadiah to stand up for the prophets so, though he ran the risk of losing his high office, his property, and even his life ?

It was well for those hundred men that they were good, or Obadiah would never have cared for them. When Elijah had eight hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal killed, nobody stood up for them. No wicked man took a hundred of them and hid them in a cave, where Elijah could not find them. If you are good, good people will stand up for you and help you. Even at school how quickly do you see the good come to help

each other. And if you are good, God will help you. Good men may not be able to give the help you need, but God is always able and ready. They may not know about your trouble and how much you are in want, but He always knows. Sometimes the best men have been so imposed upon they take for granted that all who ask their help are bad and are trying to deceive them. But God has never been imposed on, and never makes a mistake. If you are only good He watches over you more carefully than the kindest mother, and He has everything you need. If He does not give you what you wish, it is because it is not good for you. God is not only a master but a friend to them that serve Him. Satan is a master to the wicked, but never a friend. He does not even pretend to love them. He tells them they will have a good time doing as they please, if they will serve him, but he does not care anything for them, and when they cannot work for him any more by making other people wicked, he is willing they should suffer and die.



Another point I wish you to remember is, that you can be good anywhere, if you will. No matter how wicked the people are around you, you can still do right and serve God. It is harder, of course, and there is more temptation, and you must watch to see that your bad companions do not lead you into sin, almost without your knowing it. Some people are always trying to throw the blame of their sins off on others and say, as if that was any excuse, "I did not wish to do wrong, but the others did it and kept after me and I yielded." And they seem to think that is an excuse, and they are badly treated when they are punished. If there was ever a man who might have made such an excuse, it was Obadiah. He was all alone in that court to worship God. Everybody else, either from fear of the queen or from a desire to go with the crowd, worshiped Baal. He had no one to sympathize with him, and to encourage him. It is very disheartening to have to stand against a crowd and to feel that everybody is against you. It takes a brave man to be good when he is surrounded as Obadiah was.

But Obadiah was not alone. Whenever any courtier ridiculed his religion, when Jezebel said to him, "I'll have your life yet if you won't worship Baal," when he saw all the others going to the idol's temple and he could not leave his place to go to the Lord's temple at Jerusalem; when he stood thus alone in the king's palace, he was not alone, for God was with him. He knew the Lord was the only true God, and he had faith to believe Baal worship would be driven out some time. He was sorry for the famine for some reasons, and yet for others he was glad of it, because he knew God sent it and he hoped the time would soon come when the people would throw away their idols and return to the true worship. Every day he prayed to God to hasten the time when the people would repent. Obadiah had no church to attend and no one to encourage him, but he stood firm to his principles.

Here is a grand example for you to follow. There is no excuse for your doing wrong, because the others all do wrong. You have

your Bible to show you the right way if you will read it, and you do not have to go far away to a temple at Jerusalem to worship. If all your companions do wrong, if they try to deceive their parents and teachers; if they use language at play they would not use if their mothers stood by; if they all break the Sabbath, or tell falsehoods and try to excuse them; that is no reason why you should do the same. If you are only brave and faithful like Obadiah, you can be as good as he was, although surrounded by evil. Of course it is better and happier to be surrounded by good people, and we should never make associates of the bad if we can help it. Obadiah did not choose to be where he was, rather than in Jerusalem, because he had a high office and could make money there. His work was there, and he could do it without doing wrong himself. If Ahab had called on him to break the Sabbath, he would have called in vain. Obadiah would have given up his office before he would have violated one of God's commandments. Ahab was a very

wicked man, and Obadiah could have no respect for him. But he was Obadiah's king, and therefore the good man was respectful and obedient to him. It is no excuse for impertinence or for disobedience to those in authority over us, that we do not respect them. I heard a scholar once say, "I don't intend to obey my teacher because I haven't any respect for him. He told a falsehood to the school." Now this did not make it right for the scholar to refuse obedience any more than it would have been right for Obadiah to have been an unfaithful officer to Ahab.

The last point I would have you remember, is the duty of fearing God in your youth. Obadiah tells Elijah he had feared the Lord from his youth, though we might have known that, by his standing so firm and true where every one around him was wicked. You see he had formed the old habit of doing right, and such a habit is like one of the old coats of armor against temptation. He had been brave and truthful, honest and God-fearing so long it came natural to him to keep it up.

Temptation is hard enough for us to bear at best, but we can bear it so much better if we have grown strong in doing right. Some people seem to think it is a good thing to know all about sin and wickedness. But the best way to keep from typhoid fever is not to breathe bad air, but to have your blood so pure from having breathed only pure air that the disease cannot take hold of you.

Obadiah was so respectful to God's prophet that he fell on his face before him and called him "My lord." Yet Obadiah was a great man in the kingdom and Elijah was a poor man whom the king was trying to kill. But he was God's prophet and so Obadiah reverences him. He speaks respectfully too of king Ahab—what a polite and courteous gentleman Obadiah was! Trained from childhood in piety and in good manners, no wonder he became a noble man.

He was a great man, filling a high office well. He was a wealthy man, even in the hardest time, feeding a hundred prophets. He was a courteous, brave gentleman, think-

ing of others rather than of himself. But far above all that it is written of him that he "feared the Lord greatly." He has been dead thousands of years, but he has left us his noble example to follow. He feared the Lord greatly; feared Him from his youth. That does not mean that he feared the Lord as you might fear a robber. It means he loved and revered the Lord, thought about Him, and served Him, and feared to do wrong. If he was tempted to sin, he thought of how God would be displeased, and he did this in everything from the time he was a little boy. Obadiah died a long, long time ago, and yet he is alive now. Do you suppose he cares to-day up in heaven, whether while he was on earth he was Ahab's highest officer or his lowest servant? But oh! is he not glad that he feared the Lord greatly from his youth?

You hear a great deal in these days about trying to make something of yourselves, trying to make a mark in the world. And if you do not take care you will find yourself thinking about your own getting along all the

time. But I tell you the only getting along you need care for is to learn to fear the Lord greatly. It makes no difference to Obadiah now, how he got along in the world, but think of the difference to him because he feared the Lord greatly! Ahab was higher than Obadiah while they lived, but where is Ahab to-day?

I have not told you stories this morning because I thought you could be deeply interested in Bible truth, without needing to be entertained by anecdotes. These are the four points I wish you to remember: 1st, Only the good are trusted. 2d, The good always stand up for each other. 3d, You can be good anywhere, no matter how wicked the people are around you. 4th, It is a noble thing to fear the Lord from your youth. And there is one question for you to ask yourselves. How can I be good? There is but one way for the little child and for the old man, and that is to repent of your sins, trust Christ for your salvation, and "fear God greatly." Obadiah could not have been true and brave

among all those wicked men, if he had not loved and trusted God. No man can do right without faith in God. The younger you begin being a Christian, the easier it will be for you to resist temptation. You must fear the Lord in little things, even in your games. Remember, God is displeased if you cheat in your games, and cheating there is as wicked as cheating in business. You must fear the Lord in all things, so will you grow up noble and stainless like God's true-hearted servant, Obadiah.



## VI.

### THE POWER OF A KING'S WORD.

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*Is not my word like as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?—*  
JEREMIAH XXIII: 29.

This chapter of Jeremiah was written to show the difference between man's word and God's word. There were true prophets in those days to whom God gave messages for the people, but they did not like the messages. Jeremiah was one of these prophets and the people treated him very badly. For Israel had grown to be a very wicked nation. Ever since Jeroboam had made the golden calves and told the people to worship them, they had been getting worse and worse. In the land of Judah there had been some good kings, but in the land of Israel, where the ten tribes lived, all the kings had been bad men. You think the people might be good though their

kings were bad? Remember the people did not have Bibles, printed for everybody, in those days. Only a part of the Bible had been written then, and there were but few copies in manuscript, and very few of the people could read. It is true that the priests and the Levites kept up the worship in the Temple at Jerusalem and read out of the Bible to the people, but a great many of the people seldom or never went to Jerusalem. It is very easy to forget a thing when you do not read it yourself and do not hear it often.

The wicked kings of Judah would shut up the Temple and drive away the priests and Levites. They would also make idols and build temples for them in different places, where they would offer sacrifices. A little boy in Samaria, at the time of Ahaz, would have had no Bible or good book to read, and no churches or Sunday schools to attend. He would hardly have known when the Sabbath day came. When he went out on the streets he saw the priests of Baal, grandly dressed, going in procession along the streets, and if

he followed the procession, as boys have always liked to do, he would have gone to some temple of Baal where the priests went in and worshiped before the great idol, burning incense and offering cattle in sacrifice on the altars. The city was full of Baal altars. The temples were mostly on tops of hills, but many of the altars were on the tops of the houses, for the roofs were flat. The father in a family would be a priest of Baal to go up on the house top and burn incense on the altar there; and all the children would go up to see what the priest did and to smell the incense.

All a little boy in Jerusalem, at that time, could see of the worship of the true God, was a great white temple standing on Mount Moriah, all shut up and silent. Sometimes the kings were so bad they put idols in the court of the temple, though we do not read that any of them ever dared to put an idol in the Holy of Holies. Is it any wonder that boys, growing up like that, forgot about the true God? Why, Bibles were so scarce at one time

that a good king who wanted to serve God did not have a copy, and he could not get one till at last in clearing out the Temple he found one hidden away. The people got worse and worse. They worshiped idols, they quarreled, they lied, they cheated, they broke the Sabbath, they killed each other, and did every sort of wickedness. But there were always some good people among them, for God never leaves Himself without witnesses. Even when the world got so bad that God sent the flood, there were eight good people left. And when it seemed to Elijah that he was the only one left who loved God, God told him that there were seven thousand faithful ones in Israel.

God tried to save the people from such wickedness, but they would not be saved. He sent prophets with messages to them, and these prophets told the people how God would punish them for their sins. They told them how wicked they were, and begged them to destroy their idols and worship God, to "cease to do evil and learn to do well," and if they did not repent Jerusalem would be

taken by an enemy and the people would be carried away captives into a strange land. Jeremiah was continually telling of the terrible times that were coming upon the people if they did not obey God. When he told them how the city would be burned and the people carried away he felt so badly to think they would not listen to him and quit their evil ways, that he wept, and so came to be called the "weeping prophet."

Wicked men do not like to be told of their wickedness and to be asked to become good. They like to be praised and to be told what fine fellows they are. They do not like to be told how angry God is with the wicked and what terrible punishments are coming upon them. They prefer to hear pleasant things. Many people in this day are angry when preachers talk of their wickedness and tell them of the awful punishment in hell those must suffer who refuse to repent of their sins. They wish preachers to say nothing about such disagreeable things, but to tell how beautiful heaven is, as if it made any differ-

ence to a man who will not repent whether heaven is beautiful or not. I have known children who could not bear to be told when they were bad ; they would pout and cry and talk impudently to their parents. They wish to be praised whether they deserve it or not. They wish to be told that they are pretty and lovely and will make fine men and women when they grow up.

Those old Israelites were very much like the people who live now. It made them angry with the prophet when he told them how God would punish their sins. They said to the prophet, "Prophecy to us smooth things," that is, "Tell us we are going to have a good time ; that God will let us do as we please and will not punish us. Tell us that we are a great nation, and are going to have fine crops and that money will be plenty. Tell us also that we are going to conquer all these Philistines, Syrians and Egyptians, and that Jerusalem will be the greatest and finest city in the world." But God's prophets would not talk that way. They told the people just what

God said ; that if they would not give up their idols and quit their sins, terrible times were coming, when they would be hungry and have no food, thirsty, and water would be very scarce and high priced, when pestilences as bad as yellow fever and cholera would come upon them, and when their enemies would kill them and carry them off till the land should be desolate.

The people were very cruel to the prophets because they would not tell them pleasant things. One king, it is said, took the old prophet Isaiah and carried him out of the city to a valley and there had the old man sawed in two with a saw such as men saw logs with. Was not that a terrible death for God's prophet? How fearfully wicked that king was to kill so good a prophet! Jeremiah, who wrote this book from which my text is taken, made the princes very angry by telling them Jerusalem would be burned by Nebuchadnezzar. So they took Jeremiah and let him down in an old well that had no water, but had very deep mud at the bottom, and left

him there with the mud coming almost up to his shoulders. And there he staid living on bread that was let down to him by a rope, till a man, not so bad as the princes, went to the king and told him it was a shame to treat an old man so, and that he could not live much longer in that well. The king ordered the prophet to be taken out of the well, and to be put in prison.

But in spite of the cruel way they were treated, these prophets kept on telling the people how wicked they were, and how terribly God would punish them. It made the people feel very uneasy to hear such things, for God's word is a fire that will burn bad hearts. And since the true prophets would not say smooth things to the people while they kept on in their sins, there arose false prophets who told them pleasant things all the time. These false prophets pretended that God had sent them. They would say, "The Lord hath said," when He had not said. We read in the 17th verse of this chapter, "They say still unto them that despise



me. The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace, and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, no evil shall come upon you."

The people were ready and glad to listen to these pleasant things; to be told that no matter how wicked they were they should have peace, and that they could go on doing wrong and no evil would come upon them. That was the kind of prophesying that they liked. They did not get angry with those prophets or put them in wells; they liked to hear them tell of good times that were coming, and how easy it was to be at peace with God, and go on in their sins. Jeremiah kept telling them about their sins and kept saying, "Repent!" "Repent!" "Repent!" till they could not bear to hear him. But these false prophets did not say a word about repentance.

It is very well to hear pleasant things if only they are true; but suppose they are false? Suppose you were sick, and your mother sent for the doctor to give you medi-

cine to make you well. The doctor would come and, because he knew you did not like the taste of medicine, he should say—"Your boy is not sick; he does not need any medicine, he will be running everywhere in a day or two, and will grow up to be a strong, fine looking man." And day after day the doctor would say the same thing, while you got worse and worse until you died. Would that be a kind doctor? Would you not rather have a doctor who would tell you the truth and give you the medicine you needed to get well, even if it did taste bad? You see, it is not true kindness to tell people pleasant things that are false. Jeremiah was the kind prophet because he told the people the truth and gave them true warning. He told them God would severely punish them if they kept on in their wickedness, but that if they did repent, these terrible things would not come upon them. It was as if the people were walking along a pleasant road across which there was a dreadful precipice which they could not see, and one man should tell them,

"The road is safe and pleasant," and another should say, "There is a precipice before you. If you go on you will be dashed to pieces. Turn back! Turn back while you can!" Which would be the kind man? Would not the people be foolish to go on because the road was pleasant, and they liked it?

God told the Israelites the false prophets were telling them lies, and that he was angry with those prophets for their wickedness. They were not only bad themselves but, what is far worse, they tried to make other people bad too. It is very wicked to try to get others to do wrong. That is to be like Satan. Never try to get a boy to do what his mother has forbidden. Never try to make a girl talk or disobey the teacher at school. You do not wish to be like those false prophets, do you?

God explained to the people how they could tell His words from those of the false prophets. They said things that put people in a good humor with themselves, that made them think, "How good we are; we are not bad like those Philistines and Canaanites.

We are as good as we need to be." But God's words were not so. He says, "Is not my word as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

They knew His word of old and could remember how it acted upon their hearts. God is a wise Father to His children. Our earthly fathers are not always praising their children. Just imagine a father always telling his little son how good he was and how bright and how sweet, and that he always did just right—would you think that father had good sense? How long would a boy who always had such things said to him have any sense? A loving and sensible father praises his son for what he does right, but rebukes him for what he does wrong, and punishes him to prevent his doing wrong again. If there lives a boy who never did wrong at all, I have never seen him—have you? I knew a little girl once who never cried nor made any loud noise, but always smiled and was polite to grown people, so her mother called her an "angel." But she was very selfish, and that was not at all like

an angel. God does not talk foolishly to Israel. His word was not all praise, like the false prophets, but it was like a fire that burns, and like a hammer that strikes, their hearts.

“Is not my word like a fire? saith the Lord.” Have you not found it like a fire, children? When you have done wrong and you remember some verse in the Bible, does it not burn? It has been so with me. When I was a little boy and used to quarrel with my brother, as I am sorry to say I sometimes did, there were two Bible verses that would come into my mind—“Little children, love one another,” and “Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment,” and how they did burn my heart. And when I went to say my prayers I felt that God knew all about how bad I had been, and that made my heart burn. You know when you have done wrong and think about it, you feel very much as if something was burning you inside. But when you do right, then how warm your heart is! Then God’s word is like a fire that warms you, and looks

bright and beautiful, but does not burn you. The best feeling in the world is to feel that we have done right and God is pleased with us. But it is not well for us to think we have done right when we haven't. God's word is a fire to burn out all our dross and show us just what is gold and what is not. That is probably what this verse means. His word is compared to refiner's fire. Gold and silver, you know, are found in the earth mixed up with other things. If you should pick up a piece of silver ore, all black and grimy looking, you would never think it had any silver in it. And you could not get the silver out from the other things if you tried. You might wash it and scour it with all your might, but that would not take away the dross. But the refiner will take it and throw it into the fire, and if you watch you will see the lump disappearing, and a bright stream of silver running from it, white and shining. That is the way God's word acts. It is the only thing that can take the wickedness out of a child or a man. You may try to make

yourselves good, and others may try to make you good, but the wickedness is in your hearts and you cannot take it away. Then God's word comes into your souls, and how it burns! It shows you what a sinner you are. It tells you how you ought to love God and how you haven't, but have loved yourselves. It tells you to be meek and forgiving, and how you have often been angry. It tells you to obey your parents, and you have disobeyed them more times than you can count up. It tells you to be kind, and you remember how you have treated your schoolmates and your brothers and sisters.

Before the word of God told you so much, you thought you were good enough because you did not swear and lie and steal but went to Sunday school. But when God's word tells you what you have done and tells of the good you would not do, it does seem there is no end to your sins. You begin to think you are so bad God will not forgive your sins; but His word tells you He will forgive you. He knew just how bad everybody would be,

yet He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins.

God knows all about how wicked people are. His words shows us some of our sins, but He knows them all. He says to each of us, "Son, give me thy heart," and when we give it to Him, He takes the old heart and gives us a new one with love to Jesus in it. If it were not for His words burning us, we would go on thinking we were about good enough, and that we were much better than other people, and so we would never get new hearts. The way false prophets in the world to-day talk is to make people think they are good enough already, and as if only a little doing better is all that is necessary, and that real repentance is not to be required. Such words do not burn like fire. It does not take away the bad we have already done, for us not to do it any more.

The Bible tells us how holy God is, how kind and loving He has been to us, and how much he is grieved by all the wrong we do. And when we think of that, how can we help



being sorry for our sins? When we remember how God has loved us, and how little we have loved Him, how can we help feeling guilty? Why, we ought to feel almost like crying our eyes out, when we think how we have grieved the good and loving Saviour who has done so much for us. Oh! how we ought to love Jesus! who washes our hearts in His blood to make them clean and holy, so that instead of grieving, they will love and obey Him. And the more we feel guilty because of our sins, the more we will love God for forgiving them. If we think we are only a little bad, and need to be saved only a little, we will not be very grateful to Jesus for dying to save us. The Bible says, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Fire acts differently on different things. If you put a lump of gold, and a lump of coal and a lump of clay into a hot fire, it will purify the gold, burn up the coal, and harden the clay. So the word of God does not do the same thing to all hearts. The same fire

melts wax and hardens clay, and so the same Bible melts one heart and hardens another. You see the difference is in the thing, not in the fire, and so the difference is in the hearts. If you will listen to the Bible, it will make you better, but if you will not listen, it will make you worse. If, when you do wrong, God's word does not make you sorry and make you pray to be forgiven for Christ's sake, you will be hardened and grow worse and worse till, after a while, nothing will make any impression on your hard hearts. But what makes men's hearts soften under the word? That is the work of the Holy Spirit. If it were not for Him all our hearts would get harder, as the clay does, but He prepares them so that God's word melts them. You must not forget to pray your Heavenly Father to send you the Holy Spirit to make you holy and loving. However small you are the Holy Spirit will come to you if you pray for Him. He loves little children as well as He loves grown people. God speaks to the smallest child as well as the

oldest man, when He says He is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than earthly parents, to give good things to their children.

How thankful we ought to be for God's word. We are not left to false prophets! How thankful we ought to be that this word is like a fire to burn the dross out of us. We all wish to go to heaven, and there even the streets are pure gold without any dross in it. How would we feel if God would let us go there, where all is pure and bright and holy, if we were dark and guilty and sinful? Would there be any pleasure for us there? Is not God good to burn the dross out of us in this world?

And I wish you to remember above all things that God loves you. Whenever you do wrong, if you are cross or selfish or unkind, if you play when you ought to be studying, if you disobey your parents and love what is wrong, think how good God is and how grieved He is at your sin. Then be sorry, and pray that He will forgive you for Christ's sake, and help you to do right.

## VII.

### FOUR BRIGHT BOYS.

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*"Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse."*—DANIEL I: 16.

I wish to tell you to-day of a part of the history of four boys, which is given us in the book of Daniel. They were boys who had known a happy childhood. Their fathers were princes, we are told, but better still their parents were pious people, who served God and were careful to obey His laws. We know this from the way these boys behaved in a foreign country. When a little boy or girl comes to see you and is neat and clean, kind and obliging, does not complain, and want all the rest to play his way, but wishes to do what will please the other children, and does not seem to think of himself—do you not know that boy or girl has been well raised by

good parents? That is the way we know these boys had pious parents, because they were such good boys and so anxious to please God and keep His laws after they were away from their parents. These good parents did not think children ought to grow up about as they pleased and hoping that when they were grown that somehow they would do right. They took great pains with these boys to teach them to obey God's commandments and to care more for pleasing Him than for anything else in the world. They did not know what trouble might be before these boys in life, but the parents knew that the best thing they could do for their sons was to train them in the law of the Lord and then there need be no fear for them. Great trouble did come on these boys before they were grown. Their parents were good people, but there were very few good people in that country. God was angry with them for their wickedness and would not protect the country any longer. So the great king Nebuchadnezzar came to fight against Jerusalem with

a large army. Those were sad times for the children in the city. Their fathers were on the walls fighting, and very often children saw their fathers brought home dead, having been killed in the battle. Their mothers had very little to give them to eat, and many a child cried in vain for bread. But after a while Nebuchadnezzar took the city, and the children were frightened at seeing foreign soldiers going around the streets and coming into their homes.

Nebuchadnezzar had told his officers to take some of the finest looking children of the king's and princes' families to carry off to Babylon, his capital city. Just think how those poor children felt when the officers went round to their homes and picked out whichever ones they pleased, and said to the soldiers—"We will take this one and that one there!" How the children must have cried as they went off with the soldiers! The most of them had no fathers now, for they had been killed in the fighting, and many of their mothers were dead also. Sometimes the

soldiers would kill all of a family except some one little boy or girl to whom they took a fancy, and often it would have been far better for the children if they had been killed too. Think how you would feel if a great army should come and capture your homes, kill nearly all your fathers and many of your mothers, and many of your brothers and sisters, and then take you and carry you away off to their country among strangers, never to come back nor to see any of your friends again. It would be bad enough to go into a strange land to live where you could not understand the talk of the people, even if some friend went with you to take care of you. But to go with enemies who had killed your fathers and might kill you at any time, and who could treat you ever so badly if they wished, and nobody would protect you—can you think of any sadder thing that could happen to little boys?

It is believed that all the families of these four boys I wish to talk about, were killed in Jerusalem ; but however that was, the boys

were carried with other prisoners to Babylon and kept there till the king's pleasure should be known concerning them. One day in Babylon the king called Ashpenaz, the officer who was over his household, and told him he wished him to look over the children they had brought from Judea and to pick out the best of them for the king's service in the palace. He did not know what places he would give them when they were grown, or whether he would make servants or officers or governors out of them. That would depend on how they turned out. But the king was very particular that only the finest boys should be brought, and he charged Ashpenaz very carefully. They must be healthy, strong boys, and they must be handsome, for the king did not like to see ugly things about him. They must be bright, and of good families, the children of princes, and of polished manners, for they must be able to stand in the king's presence. These boys were to be brought to the palace and fed from the king's own table. They were to have teachers to teach them the lan-



guage and all the learning of the Chaldeans. And the Chaldeans were the best educated people in the world at that time, you must remember. So you see it was quite an honor the king was putting on these little Israelites. Although they were prisoners from a conquered people, yet the king was going to give them the best advantages his kingdom afforded.

How many Hebrew boys the king told the officer he might take, we do not know; probably he left that to Ashpenaz. But the orders were so strict and he knew the king was so particular that Ashpenaz found only four, as it appears, who were of the princes' families, without any blemish, well and strong, beautiful and well-behaved, and bright to learn. The king did not ask for good boys; you see he thought that if he took boys like he said they would be sure to be brave, truthful and honorable. And as for religion; I'm sorry to say the king was a worshiper of idols himself, and did not care whether the boys were pious or not. He did not, however, require them

to worship his idols. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar did not care very much for any worship. He thought only of being great and of conquering the countries around him.

One day, there in Babylon, the Jewish children saw a high officer and his servants come down to the place where they were kept. He made them all stand before him, and he looked at them very closely. Sometimes he would talk with one or another of his men; but at last he chose out four boys, and told the others they could go. He was to take these boys and to train them for three years in every possible way to make the most of them. They were to be fed from the king's table that they might have the finest of food, and they were to be educated by the best teachers in the kingdom. This must be done three years before the proud king would have them brought before him. There were many other children, but of the children of Judah were taken only four little boys—Daniel, Hananiah, Michael and Azariah.

Ashpenaz was a kind hearted man and he

was much pleased with the boys in his charge, especially with Daniel. If any one had asked Ashpenaz why he loved Daniel, I suppose he would have said, "He is such a brave, bright, honorable and beautiful boy." But we know another reason, that Ashpenaz did not know ; God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince in whose care he was. For God loved Daniel. When his father and friends had been killed yonder in Jerusalem, and the boy was carried off by enemies, his best friend had not been killed. God was watching over him and was as near to him here in Babylon as at the Temple in Jerusalem. The Bible tells us that when a man's ways please God, "He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." God has control over men's hearts. If your ways please Him, He can make everybody love you, whose love you need.

Daniel was but a child when he was torn from home and carried off into a strange land. But he did not forget the law of the Lord in anything. It was a great honor for these little

boys to be picked out from the prisoners and fed from the king's table and educated by the best teachers and at the king's expense. If they could only win the king's favor, these poor little foreigners might get to be the first men in that great empire, the greatest in the world at that time. If they made the king angry, they would either be killed or be made into the lowest slaves. Daniel was very grateful to Nebuchadnezzar for being so kind to him, and he was anxious to study hard and please the king in every way he could, without breaking the law of God. But where the Lord was concerned, Daniel was as firm as a rock. Little boy as he was, you could not stir him from what was right. The Lord had commanded the children of Israel that they must not eat anything which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. Daniel knew that all the meat on the king's table had been offered to the idol before any of it was eaten. He knew too that when the king lay down at the table—for they did not sit as we do—instead of saying grace as Christians do, he

took up a cup of wine and poured a little out on the floor in honor of the false god. They called that "offering a libation" to the god, and after that was done, all would drink. Daniel was not willing to eat anything that had been offered to idols; for his father and mother had taught him God had forbidden his doing such a thing; and although his parents were dead, and he was a boy away off among these idolaters, he had not forgotten what his father and mother had taught him.

Daniel talked with the other boys, and they felt just as he did. They wanted to please God as their parents had taught them. All the long time which had passed in the slow journey so far, and all the time they had been prisoners with no one to tell them what was right, they had not forgotten the religion they had learned at home. I wonder how many of the boys and girls have been as brave and faithful as these boys were? They were boys, and they liked fine things to eat just as other boys do. Just the finest things that could be thought of were sent them from the

king's table. Thanksgiving-day and Christmas dinners were nothing to the way the king fared every day, and these boys had whatever he had. I am afraid some boys in Louisville would have forgotten God's law and tried to make up for the hard fare they had so long as prisoners, by eating all the more of the good things from the king's table. Besides, there was danger of making the king angry. He might, when he heard of their refusing to eat, say, "What! those little beggars think they are too good to eat what I eat? then they shall eat nothing at all and see how they will like that!" What would then become of the poor children? Just think how many good excuses those boys might have found for violating God's law. You may be sure of one thing, children; if you wish to do wrong, the devil will give you plenty of excuses for doing it—you can think of so many reasons for doing it. But you must learn not to wish to do wrong; tell Satan you don't want any of his excuses, for you are determined to do right, and that never needs any excuse.

So Daniel spoke to Ashpenaz and asked him please to let them off from eating what came from the king's table. Ashpenaz loved Daniel and was not angry with the brave little fellow for making the request. He seems to have been a good-natured, kindly man, and he honored the boy for his desire to obey his God, although he was away from his own country and among people who worshiped other gods. But although Ashpenaz would willingly have done what the boys wished, he was afraid of the king. He told Daniel in substance—I wish I could grant your wish, boys, but the king has given orders that you should be fed with the food from his table. All the other children I have in charge are eating that, and if at the end of the three years when the king sees all the children, you four boys do not look as well as the rest, he will inquire into the matter and take my head off for not obeying his order. You surely don't wish me to lose my life, do you?

I reckon little Daniel went off with his heart very sad, to tell the other boys what Ash-

penaz said. They wished to obey God, but they did not wish their friend who had been so kind to them to be killed by the king. How these little fellows must have prayed to God to show them how they could obey Him and not make Ashpenaz lose his head. They said to each other—All Ashpenaz is afraid of, is that we will not grow as fast and look as well as the other children. If we could convince him of that, he would be willing we should eat what we please. We will get Melzar to try us and see. Daniel, therefore, who seems to have been the oldest boy, and to have done the talking for them, went to Melzar, the one who had special charge of them, and said, “Give us pulse to eat and water to drink for ten days.” This pulse was vegetables that had not been offered to idols. Ten days, Daniel said, cannot make any difference in the three years. Even if we do look worse for that long we can easily make it up. Just try us ten days then, and look at us and at the other children who have been eating from the king’s table and see how we



compare with them. We can almost see the handsome little fellow as he stood looking up so earnestly and beseechingly into Melzar's face. No doubt Melzar thought Daniel's scruples of conscience were all foolishness, but it was a good thing to see a boy so anxious to do what his parents had taught him. Poor little orphan, among these enemies of his country, with no one to teach him his father's religion, and yet so anxious to do what he had been taught at home! We can well believe that Melzar's eyes were dim as he answered—"All right, my boy! I'll try you;" and that during the ten days of the trial, he watched the boys and was almost as eager as they were that it might prove as well for them to live on the simple diet they had chosen.

How bright and happy the boys were now they had their wish! How sure Daniel was that they would look fatter and fresher than the other children. He had faith that God would bless boys who were trying so hard to do right. And God did bless them, for He has said, "Him that honoreth me I will

honor," and these boys were trying hard to honor God by keeping the law. When the ten days were over and Melzar put all the children together to look at them, these four boys were brighter and fresher, and better looking than any of the rest. So he was glad to tell them they might eat what they chose for the three years they were to be under his care. "He gave them pulse," it is written, that is, vegetables, barley and wheat bread, peas, beans and such things, "with water to drink." For three years these boys did not touch any of the meat or fine pastries and confections they might have had, but ate their pulse and drank their water, glad they were not obliged to eat the fine things that had been offered to idols.

What became of these brave boys, afterward? You may be sure they grew up to be noble men. Boys so well trained by their parents, so brave, so determined to do what was right under such hard trials, always grow up to be noble and true men. I have not time now to tell you what became of them, but if

you will read the first six chapters of the book of Daniel you will find out. Those of you who are so young you have not yet learned to read well enough to read it, can ask your mothers to tell you the story of these four boys after they grew to be men.

I wonder how many of you would have been as brave and faithful as were those four? Suppose the Emperor of Russia were to come here with a great army, kill your parents, burn this city and carry you off to St. Petersburg, would you think more of pleasing God while you were there, than you would of having a good time? You could eat anything that they gave you, for you are not under the same law as Daniel was; but suppose the emperor commanded that you should work on Sunday—would you refuse like Daniel? There is no danger that you will be carried away from your homes in any such way. The danger for you is that you will forget God in your homes and in your schools, and not be more anxious to please Him than you are to have a good time yourself. No

king will command you to do wrong, but Satan will tempt you. Will you be brave and faithful against him?

Perhaps some little boy may be thinking—"If Nebuchadnezzar had carried me off, I would have been as brave and true as those boys, and would have loved God as well." But if you would have been brave then, you are brave now in little things. No boy can be good all of a sudden, because some great thing has happened to him. Unless Daniel had been anxious to please God in everything, and afraid of nothing but doing wrong, when he was a little boy at home, he would not have acted so nobly in Babylon.

Now there are four things I wish you to remember from the story of these boys. It is well for boys to be handsome. Much may depend on it. If Daniel and his friends had not been good looking boys, they would have grown up as slaves in Babylon, or they would have been killed in Jerusalem. Fine clothes do not make a boy handsome. So a boy's clothes are neat and whole, it is not manly to

care about their being fine. But a clear, clean skin, glossy hair, bright eyes, sunny face, erect form and brisk step, these do make boys handsome. They must not shuffle their feet when they walk, nor go stooped over so as to be round-shouldered. They must keep their skin all clean and pure with cold water, and not merely their faces and hands, else their skin will be muddy and yellow looking, instead of clear and healthy. They must always be cheerful, never sullen or cross, for that will give any face a gloomy, disagreeable look and a scowl, which would have made even Daniel ugly. Whining and complaining ruins any face. And eyes will not be bright if you live on candy and sweet things, or do not have enough pure, fresh air and sunshine in your schoolrooms and your bedrooms. Now, Daniel was a little prince, and I do not suppose had ever in his life been allowed to go without his daily bath or to sit down with soiled hands after his play, or to stay in a room without plenty of fresh air and sunshine. This much his princely parents had done for him,

we may be sure. But he would not have been the handsome boy he was if he had ever disfigured his face and ruined his expression by fretting and pouting.

In the second place, boys must be obliging and polite in their manners. The king wished such boys as could stand in his palace. Many a boy and many a man have owed more of their success or failure to their manners than to their brains. If several boys are after the same place in a store the merchant will employ the one who has the pleasantest manners. If any clerks are to be dismissed because business is dull, it is always the bad mannered ones who are sent away first. Many a lawyer, doctor, merchant, or man in any business has owed his success to his pleasant manners. You must be bright and obliging at all times or you cannot be so when it is to your interest.

Now I have two more things to tell which are more important than the two I've just mentioned. A boy must be brave, if he is to be of any account in this world, or to be holy in the next. For we are told in the Bible that

cowards have their portion in the lake of fire. You must be brave to fight only when fighting is necessary to defend your country or to protect the weak, or to protect the laws from being violated. To fight for other things is not brave, but cowardly. But the highest courage is to be brave to do right, not afraid of being laughed at or of making some one angry. Do you suppose Daniel cared if all the other children laughed at him for eating pulse? Do you suppose any young man in Babylon could have made him go in and take a drink for fear if he refused that young man would be angry with him? Boys, did one of you ever tell a falsehood? What made you tell it? Was it not because you were afraid of being laughed at, or of making some one angry, or of being punished? Why, cowardice is at the bottom of nearly all the lies ever told, and of the mean sins which men commit. You need to be brave in order to be honorable and truthful.

The last thing, and I have left it to the last because it is the best, is that boys should think

first of obeying God and be anxious to please Him, whether they have a good time or not themselves. Just do not think about yourselves, but think of God. Daniel did not think whether he would not be driven out of the palace and be made a slave of if he displeased the king! still less did he stop to think whether the pulse would taste as good as the fine things from the king's table—he thought only of pleasing God. And you must try to please God not simply because if you do so He will take you to heaven—for that is loving yourself, and while that is not wrong, it is not noble or holy. It does not take any goodness to love yourself. But you must serve God because you love Him, and unless you love God, rather than yourselves, you will never reach heaven. You must try to please God because you love Him and because He loves you and is so holy, and wise and just and merciful. You try to please your father because you love him and not because you expect him to leave you some property in his will. You must forget yourself as



Daniel did, and obey God from love to Him.

In these four things Daniel was a model boy, and I wish all of you to be like him. He was handsome, well-mannered, brave and faithful to God. When you say your prayers, ask God to make you these four things. But you must never ask God for what you do not really want, and are not striving for. Oh! what noble men and women you children will make if you will only do these four things, and the last one above all—in everything forget yourself and think of pleasing God. You have often been told how to please God; the first thing is to repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you do this?

VIII.

A LESSON ON A LEAF.

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*"We all do fade as a leaf."*—PSALM LXV.

When the winter is over and gone, and vegetation comes forth from its long sleep, as we go out into the pleasant air of spring, we see the young leaves lifting their green heads from the buds that have inclosed them. As the days get longer and warmer, the leaves grow in the heat of the sunshine till all the woods and fields are covered with green foliage. Did you ever think how much of the pleasure of spring and of summer comes from the leaves? What would the world be if no leaves and no flowers came out in the springtime, but the woods and the fields remained all the year just like they are in the winter? Would it not be a dreary world?

We cannot compare our human lives to the leaves in the spring, because the leaves grow

on together till they get their full size, and then they live on through the season. Very seldom do young leaves wither and fall ere the summer comes upon them. No, each grows in its place complete and does its work while over half the people in the world die before they are grown, and even when grown very few live to old age. This is the result of our sins. If people would only live right and obey the laws of health and the laws of God, you would not see little short graves in our cemeteries; but long life and peace would be the portion of all. The young leaves on the tree of humanity would grow in strength and beauty till the autumn of old age crowned them with glory ere the winter of death.

The great tree of humanity was planted in the Garden of Eden and was then an evergreen of unfailing beauty, but standing now in the desert of sin surrounded by its sands and scorched by its hot winds this tree abides, while generations of men and women come and go like leaves on its branches. It was a small tree at first, and after it had grown

awhile the flood came and swept it all away except one shoot, but now it has grown into a great, wide-spreading tree covering the earth. Many generations, like withered leaves, lie moldering under its broad branches.

Let us see what lessons the leaves can teach us. And I want you to remember that each leaf works all the time for the benefit of the tree. So we should strive to make the world better. No leaf tries to be bigger than any other leaf on the tree. No, it grows simply to the size which will make it of most use, and then it gives all the carbon it gathers from the air to the tree. If a leaf was selfish and kept all it got it would soon be so thick and heavy it would not look like a leaf at all, and it would fall off and die, and the tree would be no better for having had such leaves. Yet are not many people like that? Suppose the leaves should say, "Every leaf for itself," and should strive to get as much and give as little as possible; why the tree would be weak and sickly, and the leaves themselves would soon fall off and wither. Are any of

you going to be like that, and try hard to get all you can for yourselves without doing anything for the world? Let us be like the leaves and work to do good to the great tree of humanity.

From every leaf there runs down a fiber through the trunk of the tree, and the work of each leaf is to make one such fiber. And although the leaf fades and dies the fiber remains as long as the tree stands. In that tree out yonder there is now a fiber for every leaf it has ever had, though the leaves faded and died many years ago. So let it be with us. Let us do our life work for mankind which will remain long after we are dead. When we fade like the leaves let there be a fiber in the tree from each of us, which will last till the end of the world.

You never saw a leaf trying to get off the limb it was on and to climb higher on the tree. The leaves are content to work away wherever they are. The highest leaf is not proud, nor does it think it is any better than the leaves on the lowest limb. If all the leaves on a

tree tried to get to the top and were not willing to be on the lower branches—what sort of a tree would that be? Would it do any good? Remember, the tree needs the leaf on the lowest limb as much as it needs the one on the highest, and that is the best leaf which does its work best for the tree, and it does not matter which branch it is on, whether the highest or the lowest. Let us not care what our position in life may be, but let our care be to do our work well for the tree.

The leaves are frail but they do solid and lasting work. The largest oak in the forest was made by the leaves. Each leaf makes a fiber, and many leaves working together make great trees out of which houses are built that shelter us, and ships are made that carry commerce over the ocean. A leaf does not think because it is frail and small it can do nothing, but it works with all its might and makes the tree bigger and stronger. Short as is their time, they are faithful. They do not think life was given them only for a gay dance in the sunshine. Are we like the leaves in these

points? Do each of us add something to the great tree of humanity? Will your fiber remain when you have faded? The tree is worthy of the best we can do. It was planted by God's hand; it was watered by Christ's blood, and it has grown by the power of the Holy Spirit. Will you do nothing for it? What would the human race have lacked if you had never been born? What would it lose now if you should die? Are you living the life of a leaf or of an oyster? Nay, for a man to live idle is worse than the life of an oyster, because though it does no work it gets fat and is good to eat, while the idle man does no good in life, and is not fit to eat when dead. Are you simply accumulating carbon for yourself, or are you distributing what you gather for the good of others?

We can learn a lesson from the leaf against attempting too much. If each leaf tried to build an entire tree, nothing would be accomplished. And the same is true if one leaf tried to control all the rest. If it expended its energies upon the fibers of its neighbors

finding fault with their efforts and trying to correct them, the summer would end and the leaf would have done nothing. Each leaf does its own appointed work, humble though it be, and the lesson to us is plain. We sometimes think—oh! if God would only give us great things to do, how joyfully we would do them! To found empires, to save nations, to write great books—such things we would like, but the little duties of every day we do not like. God does not ask us to do great things but to be faithful in little things. When we reach heaven our Lord will say to each of us, “Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things—enter thou into the joys of thy Lord.” You can be just as honest with a dime as you can be with a million dollars. Our honesty does not depend on how much money we handle, but on what sort of principle we have in us. You can be just as faithful in minding your parents as a man can be in doing the greatest thing that was ever done. It is not the biggest flower that has the sweetest perfume.



Let us do with our might what our hands find to do, instead of reaching out after the great things we would like to do, and we will find no lack of service. But too often we let the minutes slip by unnoticed, and the little duties of kindness to others and of culture for ourselves are left undone. How the leaves shame us in this. They do not hang idle, letting the days slip by, but every minute they are working. And these faithful little workers over our mountains and along our valleys leave forests as monuments of their power. But our work is more lasting than that, if we are faithful. Every mind we cultivate will carry our work with it through eternity; every soul we are the means of saving will live on in heaven long after all the forests have been burned up and the earth itself has been destroyed.

Another, and a very important thing the leaves do, is to make the air pure around them. They absorb carbonic acid gas, which is poison, and give off oxygen which is healthful. Oxygen is the thing in the air that we

need, and it is what we get by breathing. If it were not for the leaves all men and animals would die, for all the air would become bad like that in a close room where a good many people have been and where it has been kept shut up. Our breath makes the air impure, and the leaves purify it again, so we can still have good air to breathe. If there were no leaves, therefore, the air would get worse and worse till all men and animals would die. Now, in the same way, we ought to purify the spiritual air around us. People ought to be better for being near us. How is it with you? Are your companions better for being with you?

I thank God there are people who are like the leaves. Their saintly lives have an atmosphere of purity which makes those around them better. Do you not know such persons? Have you not felt about some people—"I could be good all the time if only I stay with them?" When with them you feel how dreadful it is to be vile, and how delightful it is to be pure and holy. Such are the com-

panions you should seek. Avoid the company of those who make it any easier for you to think wrong and do wrong, and get as much as you can with those who make it easier for you to think and do right. Try yourself to be so that your influence will hinder people's doing wickedly, and help them to live pure and true. Make your lives life-giving—as are the leaves—so that men shall go from your presence benefited. Give forth oxygen to the world; oxygen, which not only sustains life but rouses the energy and strengthens as well as purifiers. Carbonic acid gas benumbs those who breathe it, just as sin does to the soul, yet out of this gas the leaves get for us oxygen which we breathe, and carbon which we burn.

Thus does God bring good out of evil. If a man knew nothing of what the leaves are doing, he would observe the carbonic gas in the wood, and notice how every breathing thing was all the time making more and more of it, and he would think that the world must soon come to an end because the air would

get too impure to support life. But the leaves keep at work and prevent that. So in looking at the wickedness of the world men may get discouraged, but when they see the good that so many Christians are doing they find that the leaves are at work, and there is hope for the world. This is our work to bring good, by God's help, out of evil. When things go wrong with us, when we are sick, or suffer loss, or those we love die, let us stop and think, "What good can I get out of this for myself and for others?"

And I want you to remember that the leaves work together, helping each other. It is true that each leaf is busy making its own fiber, but if that fiber stood by itself what good would it do? It could not stand alone and the least thing would break it down. So our lives are to be helpful to each other. My fiber helps yours to stand and yours helps mine, and all together we will have a strong tree that even the tempest cannot blow down. Why, the weight of one leaf would be too much for a fiber. And they would do no

good at all if they did not work together, each one helping the rest. We are dependent on each other the same way.

“We all do fade as a leaf.” Just think how short is human life. The Bible compares it to the frailest and the fleetest things—the grass, the flower, the cloud, a dream, a leaf. Only when speaking of our eternal lives does the Scripture call us stones in the temple of God. Originally this tree of humanity stood an evergreen in God’s beautiful garden. There was no fading and dying, no drifting like withered leaves before the wind, but unfading beauty in the sunshine of Eden. It is sin that has covered the earth with graves thick as the scattered leaves of the forest. Think how many deaths are caused by particular sins. Of course everybody would die after awhile any way, because God has said, “Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.” But very few people live out their full time. Drinking liquor alone kills seventy thousand people in this country every year. That is nearly two hundred a day for every

day in the whole year. There are other vices which destroy many thousands of lives every year. And then the rage of nations in wars sweep away many more. Ah, how many leaves have these iniquities taken away! And how many now hang withered upon the tree of humanity, not yet swept away by the blast of death! Faded leaves, whose beauty has perished and whose usefulness is gone, fit only to be cast out and trodden under foot.

We all fade, under the wind of sin, and are finally taken away by death. Only two of our race have been excepted. No fading came to Enoch and Elijah, who "were not, for God took them." And yet people act as if they could remain in this world forever. We are not like the rocks and the hills which remain unchanged long after the trees have perished. But we are like leaves which last but for a brief season and are gone. And more than that, we do not know we will last through the season. Nearly all the leaves on a tree are there and flourish till the summer is over and the frost comes. But on the tree

of humanity many, so many, leaves fade and fall in the spring-time before they are grown. Haven't you known of little children dying? Babies die, and children die, and young men and women die, and the middle aged die, as well as old people. It is as if the leaves on a tree kept dying all the time, in the spring and through the summer, till when frost came there were but very few leaves left. It is in the fall that the leaves become most beautiful. Go out in the country after the first frost, and how bright and gorgeous the trees are! The leaves have many hues, and take on a new beauty before they pass away. Their work is done, and instead of withering brown and dry as do leaves that wither in summer, they put on their fairest robes, as if they were glad their work was over and their death near. So let it be with us. When our work in life is ended let us not be sad at the thought of death, but let us be bright and more joyous than ever, because we have been faithful and our reward is near.

The leaves that fall from a tree turn to

dust, and are never seen again. New leaves show themselves the next spring, but the old leaves are gone forever. Not so with the leaves that fall from the great tree of humanity. Though they molder away in the graves, God watches over them and at the resurrection they will come forth with a life that can never fade away. All of these leaves that have not been washed in Christ's blood will be cast into the lake of fire, but every one on which a drop of that precious blood has fallen shall be carried by the angels to heaven, where they shall grow in fadeless beauty and beyond the reach of frost or wind or anything that can harm them on the banks of the great River of Life,

What will be your fate, little boy? little girl? It is for you to decide. No friend can get salvation for you; no enemy can prevent your being saved. You can and must decide for yourself, and decide ere the blast of death comes to take you away. Many of you will never see the summer of manhood, and many more will not come to the autumn of old age.



When you do fade as a leaf, how will it be with you? If you will love and serve God, you will lead a useful, noble life, adding to the strength and beauty of the tree, making the air purer and growing brighter and fairer, like autumn leaves, under the chilly winds that take you away, till at last you are gathered for the conqueror's crown to adorn the Redeemer's brow when the last enemy has been destroyed, and even death itself is "swallowed up in victory."

IX.  
DON'T DRIFT.

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*"Which we have as an anchor of the soul."*—  
HEB. VI; 19.

Life has been so often compared to a voyage at sea that people have got weary of the comparison, but it is because the comparison is so true that it has become so common. Yet it is not the voyage itself to which I ask your attention to-day, my young friends, but to its beginning. Go down to a wharf where ships are preparing to go to sea, and you will find every ship, large and small, with its anchor. The sailors would not sail without it; they would not dare to go to sea without it. Whether the ship is large or small, and whether it is plain or magnificent as Cleopatra's galley, these are small matters indeed compared to having an anchor on board. Suppose I should stand where some fine ship

is getting ready to sail and should try to persuade the sailors not to take an anchor. Suppose I should say to them, "You do not need any anchor. See how fair is the weather, how clear the sun is shining and how beautiful is the day. The breeze is blowing gently and in the right direction, your ship is strong, why should you carry an anchor? The sails are the only things which you need to look after. They will catch the breeze and bear you away right royally. You have strong arms, and clear eyes and brave hearts. Anchors are a sign of timidity, and show that you are afraid you will not know how to manage the ship. And besides, anchors are not needed in these days of modern progress. They did very well when men were guided by the stars, which were often hidden by the clouds. Then it was very well to anchor the ship and wait for day, when they were near dangerous rocks at night. But now, with all the modern improvements, with instruments which will tell you where you are and where is your course, though the sun and stars are

not seen for days at a time, why trouble yourselves to carry anchors?"

What would the sailors say to me if I talked to them in that way about their anchors? Do you think such talk would persuade them to go to sea leaving their anchors on shore? Would they not think that I did not know anything about it; or else that I was their enemy, and wished to have them perish at sea? If they answered me at all, they would probably say,—“Your modern improvements have not learned to control the winds and waves, nor have they changed the rocks into feather beds. The sails are good and necessary in their place, but when we were being driven upon the rocks, all the sails the ship could hold would not be worth one anchor. Can we expect clear skies and winds blowing just to suit us, all the time?"

As no one could persuade sailors to go to sea without an anchor, so none were ever known to forget their anchors. No ship ever found itself at sea without an anchor while one man said, “I was so busy looking after

the cargo that I could not find time to see about the anchors," and another said, "I was so busy fixing up the cabin so as to make it comfortable, that I forgot all about the anchors," and a third—"I considered getting in the provisions of so much more importance than the anchors that though I did think of them, I did not think it worth while to take time to get them on board." Now, you cannot imagine sailors guilty of such foolishness as that. If the anchors had not been in their places every sailor would have promptly noticed it, and would have looked after them immediately. No excuse would be taken for the absence of the anchor, nor would the ship sail till it was on board. It would not satisfy the sailors to tell them, You do not need an anchor now, all is fair and bright, and the wind favorable, why trouble yourselves about it now? It will be time to bother about an anchor when the storms arise and the dangerous coast is near. No doubt when the time comes you will meet some ship with an anchor to spare, or you can find some substitute that will do as well!"

My young friends, you are just starting on a voyage to eternity. Whatever your circumstances, and whether your ship is large or small, fine or plain, the voyage is before you and you must sail. Are you going without an anchor? Have you thought about an anchor at all? You are so busy with your cargo of knowledge and pleasure and wealth, have you forgotten the anchor? Do you think you will not need an anchor at all? Do you flatter yourselves that no contrary winds nor dangerous currents are before you? Will you be more foolish than even the most ignorant sailor? You need an anchor; you must have an anchor; it is death to go out upon the ocean of life without an anchor, and I would have you secure it at once. What good would the largest ship, the finest cargo and the best sails do without an anchor? Do you not see that if a ship was loaded with gold, one strong anchor would be worth more than it all, when the storm was driving the ship on the deadly reef? Who would think of the cargo then? You may have the best

education, the brightest talents, and the greatest strength, and yet all these will be to you no more than sails to the ship which the wind is driving on the pointed rocks, unless you have the hope in Christ, which the Apostle calls "an anchor of the soul." You may have all worldly advantages, friends, wealth, position, education, and they will be as useless to you without the Christian hope as a cargo of diamonds would be to a ship without anchor, going swiftly to its doom. You may have all that people call pleasure, and it will be no more to you than would a store room of sweetmeats to a ship in a storm.

Let me beg you—take your anchor on board. Become a Christian as you set out in life. Whatever else you take or have, make sure first of all of this hope. There is nothing else of any importance compared with it. Do not think that you do not need it now, but when you get old or when trouble comes upon you, or death is drawing nigh, then will be time enough to think of religion. You need it to-day, and every day, to guide you in

the right way and to build up in you a noble character. For you to start in life without being a Christian is more foolish than for a sailor to go to sea without an anchor, because the religion of Jesus is not only an anchor to the soul, it is chart and compass as well. Without it life has no worthy purpose, and ends in blackest ruin. For a young man to have the best education, plenty of money and many friends, but without religion, is like a sailor who goes to sea in a fine ship and a good cargo but without an anchor, and going nowhere in particular. Nay, it is worse than that, because the sailor might chance to drift into some harbor where he could find refuge from the storm, and a market for his goods. But on the shore of eternity there is but one harbor. Everywhere else is certain ruin. And there is no drifting into that harbor; only those who have the Christian's hope can enter it.

You could not persuade a sailor to do without an anchor by telling him that anchors are old fashioned. You could not get him to take



something else instead of an anchor. Why, the ancient Phoenicians, long before Christ came into the world, used anchors very much like those in use to-day. The old pointed flukes are yet the same. Suppose you should tell the sailors that they ought to be more progressive than to use things which have been in use for thousands of years, by ignorant men, so ignorant, many of them, that they believed the world was flat and the sun went round it. We have advanced far beyond those men in other things. Great improvements have been made in building ships, and shall we use the same old anchor with its barbed flukes? Would not a sailor of good sense answer that while there had been improvements in the size and swiftness of ships, there were the same old winds and waves, the same old rocks unsoftened, on the dangerous shores, and the same old earth in which the anchors must hold? Therefore we need the same old anchor which has held so long. We cannot try experiments to see if something else will not hold as well, for while we were

making the experiment we might perish. The sailor, above all things, must have something he can trust to hold, something which has been tried and not found wanting. If a new anchor is made, entirely different from the old, it would need to be tested thoroughly and for a long time before sailors could venture to try it. For it is a matter of life and death with them, and not of scientific experiment. And no theorizing on the subject, no long arguments will do at all. It must be proved by use that the new anchor does actually hold better. Till that is done all sensible sailors will use the same old anchor which has held so long.

There are men who would know better than to try to convince sailors they ought to take something else instead of their old anchor; who will tell us to give up the Christian hope because it is so old-fashioned, and to try something else. It is the same old hope in Jesus Christ who died and rose again, on which men have relied for centuries. Ignorant men, as ignorant as the ancient sailors as well as

learned men, have clung to this hope for safety, and in these days of modern improvement we will still cling to it instead of trying substitutes turned out bran new from German workshops. Men in religion, as in other things, have sought out many inventions, but there remain the same old human nature, the same old sinfulness, the same old law of God without one jot or tittle changed, and God is the same "yesterday, to-day and forever." While these things remain unchanged, we need the same old hope as an anchor to the soul. We cannot afford to try experiments for it is with us a matter of life and death, for there is no coming back and trying again after our ships have been lost upon the rocks. Let all these substitutes for the Christian's hope be thoroughly tested, and be proved to do better than this has done. If they do no better, it would be folly to change—they must be improvements. Let these substitutes change bad men into good ones, turn fierce persecutors into zealous apostles, and make men give up their vices and become righteous

and noble. Let them make drunkards sober, the licentious pure, liars truthful, and thieves honest, as this Christian's hope has done many thousand times. Let these substitutes sustain people in affliction, guard them in temptation, and strengthen them in virtue. Let multiplied thousands, when they come to die, bear testimony to the peace and joy and hope these substitutes bring to their dying pillows. Let these new things hold their own long enough to be tested as the Christian hope has been, and then if they do all these things better than the old anchor has done, it will be time enough to ask us to think of choosing among them for something to take the place of the one men have trusted so long.

But the trouble with these new anchors from German workshops, which are claimed to be so much better than ours, is that they are rejected by the very men who made them, before they have been thoroughly tested. One man sets a new anchor before us with a great flourish of trumpets, and in a little while a man from another shop proves how worthless

it is and offers us still another warranted to hold, and so it goes. Their shops are full of cast off anchors, whose makers are forgotten, each of which was warranted to hold better than the Christian's hope. When a fresh attack is made on our religion, and something else is declared to be better, it is not necessary to answer it, still less, to be uneasy about it. If we go quietly along, it will not be long before the advocate of some newer thing will arise, and prove the absurdity of the first; and presently a third one will arise who will demolish the second as utterly. They beat their new anchors to pieces about each other's ears and thus prove how worthless they are. You will hear a good deal as you get older, though less than you would have heard twenty years ago, about the faith of your fathers being behind the times. But I wish you to show the good sense which even the most stupid sailor would show about his anchor. They will tell you how ignorant men have clung to your hope—what matter, how ignorant the sailors if the anchor *held*? They will tell you

of the superstitions of past ages; what matter if their anchor held? They will boast of philosophers who cling to substitutes and reject this anchor—what matter if the substitutes do not hold? It is quite funny to hear such men talk, who boast of their learning, and who call themselves rationalists. Now rationalist means one who is controlled entirely by reason. If this is all their reason does for them, they had better lay it aside and try to get a little common sense.

No sailor is ashamed of his anchor. He does not hide it away in some dark corner for fear somebody will see it and make fun of him about it. He puts it on deck in plain sight and where it will be ready for use. He would be ashamed to hide it away, ashamed to let people think he was such a fool as to sail without an anchor. Yet I have known young Christians who were ashamed of their hope, who dreaded to confess Christ before men, and who thought they would live a Christian life in secret. They say, "Joining a church is not necessary for salvation, and I can be a

Christian without being a church member." This is being ashamed of their anchor. And I have known church members, when away from home and among those who cared nothing for religion, to hide their hope and say nothing to let their companions know they were followers of Christ. It seems hard to believe that people should ever be ashamed of their hope, instead of glorying in it, glad to let everybody know what a Saviour they have found. Now, if any of you ever have any disposition to put your anchor out of sight for fear of being laughed at or of offending somebody, I beg you to put away all such shame. Do not be such a coward as to be so afraid of what somebody will say that you dare not do what you know is right. That is the meanest of all the sorts of cowardice. Do not think you can take the anchor on board and keep it hid. No! let it be in the plain sight of all men, that they may know you depend upon it and that it is always there ready for use.

There are men who do not want an anchor

at all. They wish to be borne about by every current. "To keep abreast of the times" is a great thing with them, and how can a man who is anchored do that? They think there is so little freedom in being anchored, compared with drifting before free currents and running before free winds. To be sure the winds and currents have a way of driving ships on the rocks, but that is not thought of; what would a sailor think if you talked to him about the narrowness of the anchor or of the rope, and the small space for movement when the fluke was firmly fixed in the earth? His one fear is that the anchor will not hold. Freedom is a great thing, but a freedom which wrecks you on the rocks is not to be desired.

We all need an anchor that will hold. In life as on the sea our own strength is not enough. To think you can save yourselves is as foolish as if a sailor thought he could save the ship from destruction by putting out his hands to hold it off the rocks. His hands! What would Samson's hands be in holding a



ship when the storm was raging, and the waves rolling high? Your strength will not avail you in the storms of sin, of temptation and of affliction which will beat upon your soul. And above all, your strength will be nothing against the judgments of God, when life is ended. My friends, my friends, do not set sail without the Christian's hope. Do not think your hands will do instead of an anchor. And if ever you hear any one say he can do without religion, think how much greater is his folly than that of the sailor who depended on putting out his hands to keep the ship off the rocks in a storm. Why is it men are so ready to acknowledge their weakness in natural things and ready to lay hold of any protection within reach, while they are not willing to admit their weakness in spiritual things, and refuse to lay hold of God's power?

The same old anchor, that has been so long tested, and in that anchor the best of material. There must be no thought of cheapness or ease in making anchors. A sham anchor is of

no service, even though made in the right shape. You would not recommend an anchor to sailors because it was so cheap, and though made of paper, looked just like iron so that seeing it on deck a person would not know the difference. Nor would you commend it because it was so much lighter and could be more easily handled; because it could be moved out of the way if they wanted room to dance and frolic on deck. What would a sailor think of such arguments? Of what use is an anchor that looks ever so fine on bright clear days, but which would dissolve when put in the water? The one use of an anchor is not to look pretty, or to be easily handled, but to hold in a storm. And we must not forget the one object of religion, which is to save from sin. Our hope must hold. An easy religion which is easily handled and cheap will do no good. There must be true "repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ." There must be a sense of guilt and a turning from sin to God, with a desire to be holy in life, and not merely a wish to avoid hell and go to heaven.

Beware of a sham hope, which will fail you in the time of trial, and will melt away before the judgment bar of God. Men have relied on false hopes. Jesus tells us that many in the last day will cry out in vain,—“Lord, Lord, have we not done wonderful works in thy name?” You will notice they do not say—“Lord, have we not been redeemed by thy blood?” The old metal must go into the anchor—repentance, faith, love; God has joined these three together. You must know you are a sinner and turn to God, you must trust Christ for salvation, you must hate sin and love holiness, and try to be and do just what God requires. A hope which rests on experience and maketh not ashamed is “an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast.”

There is no other anchor possible, my young friends. No man has ever found an anchor to his soul except in earnest religious hope. Those without it “are driven of the wind and tossed.” No belief loosely held and used only on Sundays ever gives such hope. You must believe in Christ with all your hearts and live

up to that faith. Will you sail without an anchor? Will you drift with the current, careless about eternity so only you can have a gilded barge in which to sail down the stream of time? Such a short stream for you—seventy miles or perhaps eighty, and it may be far less—and then! Now is the time for you to get the anchor. You cannot get one after you have sailed. You must either take the anchor offered you before you sail, or you must be wrecked forever more. God offers you the Christian hope now—will you take it?

X.

TWO BRIGHT GIRLS.

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*"Alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me, for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."*—JUDGES, XI, 35.

This is probably, the saddest story in all the Bible; it is sadder even than the death of Christ, because Christ's death did so much good for men. If Jesus had not died, all men would have been lost forever. It is a sad story, this about Jephtha's daughter, and I will tell you another sad story of the death of a young girl. Life is not all full of pleasure and sunshine, and it is right that children should see the darkness as well as the light, the joy as well as the sorrow. I would keep all vile things from your young eyes, but not the sad ones, for you were not meant to be only butterflies in the world.

When Jephtha's father died, his brothers drove him away from home. He went "out East" into the wild country, which was in those days like going "out West" is with us. His going was like a man's leaving here and going out into the territories into the forest. There he had to live in a rough country and contend with people who hated the Israelites. He never tried to hurt his own people although they took sides with his brothers against him; but he fought the Moabites and helped to keep them off from Israel. He was very brave and was always doing some brave thing, like the stories you read of Marion during the Revolution. And brave men who wanted to be soldiers went out and joined Jephthah there in the woods, till he had a large company.

Jephtha was a good man, for though he did one very bad thing, he thought he was doing right. The trouble with him was he did not know what was right about God. His mother was a very wicked woman and probably taught him to worship idols when

he was a little boy, though his father taught him to worship God, so he had wrong ideas about God and thought things would please Him that would not please Him. Men who thought they were doing right, have done many wicked things, because they had wrong ideas about God. Jesus told the disciple that the time would come when whoever killed them would think he was doing God service. And Paul thought he was doing right when he persecuted Christians. There are so many bad men in the world who do wrong when they know it is wrong because they like to do wrong, that it is very sad to see a man who wishes to do right, doing a wicked thing because he does not know any better, so we feel very sorry for Jephtha, as we read his story.

While he was out there in the woods, fighting the Moabites, unable to go to Shiloh where he could worship God with the people, and could have learned about God, he must have got the stories his mother told him about idols mixed with what his father had

taught him about God. To have a bad mother is the worst thing that can happen to a boy, and the wonder is that Jephtha was a good man at all. While he was out on the border and had got a great reputation for courage and victory, the people of Israel had become very wicked. They had most of them quit worshipping God, and had been bowing down to idols, so God allowed the Ammonites to conquer and oppress them. These Ammonites had been very cruel to the Israelites for eighteen years. They spread over all the country and took whatever they wanted. If a farmer had just got his wheat threshed, they would come and take it away. The farmer would beg them to leave something for his family to eat, and the children would cry, but the Ammonites did not care. They would take all his wheat and drive off his cattle and sheep, and when the farmer would say, "But we will all starve to death," they would just laugh. That is the way they treated the people for eighteen years. And at last the Israelites had flung away their



idols, and begun again to worship God. They needed some one who was brave and who knew how to fight to come and lead them against their enemies. No matter how brave a people may be they must have a good general or they cannot fight well.

Then they thought of Jephtha, of how brave he was, and of how he had fought the Moabites for years. The princes of Gilead had helped his brothers drive him away, and they did not know whether he would be willing now to come back and help them in their trouble. But they could only try, and they must have felt ashamed of themselves as they went to beg him to come back. They found him in the land of Tob. I would like to have seen Jephtha's face as he was sitting before his tent door in the evening and saw the elders of Gilead come riding up the mountain path to him. He had been gone eighteen years and yet he probably knew some of those men. How he must have arisen and straightened up his proud form when he saw them coming. What did they

want with him? Why were they following him where they had driven him? They come slowly toward the tent, and as the servants take their donkeys, they come up to where Jephtha is standing. It does not take them long to tell the story of how terribly the Ammonites had been treating them, and of how they needed him to be their general to drive the Ammonites away.

Jephtha was a good man and loved his country but he could not help smiling and reminding them of how they had treated him: "Did ye not hate me and expel me from my father's house? And why come ye now to me in your distress?" Those elders began to think by that time that the way of the transgressor is hard. When they had cried to God to deliver them He answered by telling them how often He had saved them from their enemies, and that so soon as they felt safe they went right off into idolatry. He said: "Ye have forsaken me and served other gods—go and cry unto the gods whom ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your

tribulation." And now when they come to Jephtha, the only man who could help them, he reminds them of how badly they had treated him, and wants to know why, when they were in trouble, they came to a man whom they had treated so badly when they were prosperous. But God forgave them when they threw away their idols, and they know how kind hearted Jephtha is and that he is too noble and brave to hold any spite against them, so they tell him again of their trouble and promise to make him general if he will go with them, and he agrees to go.

Since Jephtha had been out in that region he had married, and he had one daughter nearly grown. His wife was dead, and this daughter was all he had in the world to love. His father and mother were dead, and his brothers hated him and had driven him away, and this daughter was all he had. He was proud of her too, she was so good and sweet and brave and unselfish, and loved him so. Oh, how glad she was, when her

father told her to get ready to go to Gilead, for he was going back with these elders and princes who had promised to make him their general! How glad she was, as she hurried to get ready. Her father had told her all about his people, and about Moses and Joshua, and what God had done for the Israelites. When he came home at night he was never too tired to take his little girl on his knee and tell her the old Bible stories your mothers have told you. He told her of Abraham, and how God commanded him to offer his only son Isaac on an altar; and the father's arm would hold his little girl closer to his heart when she said what she would have done had she been Isaac. We may be sure Jephtha had never told her why he left home, and so she was all joy when told that they were going to that beautiful land of which she had heard so much. She was proud of her brave, strong father who was going to be general in Gilead, and she felt sure he would conquer the Ammonites and that everybody would know what a great

warrior he was, and how good and kind he was. I think there was never a girl happier than Jephtha's daughter as she went with her father to her new home in Gilead.

But the story is too sad. You all know what happened. You know how brave and loving that girl was, and how she encouraged her father and never let him see her flinch from the awful death. Read it, in the 11th chapter of Judges. We are sure the last thing she did was to throw her arms around her father's neck, and beg him not to feel sorry for her. I remember the sobs of a little girl to whom her mother read this story, as she said, "Why didn't somebody tell him better? Why didn't they say, 'God wont be pleased by your killing your daughter, you don't know how good and kind God is, he don't want you to do it?' Why didn't the priests from the tabernacle tell him better about God. Oh, mamma, why didn't somebody tell him?" Alas, why didn't they? There were priests and Levites at Shiloh who could have told Jephtha that God would

be pleased by his breaking that wicked vow and not by his keeping it; why did they not go and tell him? Perhaps they did not know anything about it till it was all over. If they had known surely they would have gone to Jephtha and carrying the law of Moses, would have convinced him how wrong he was to keep such a horrible vow. For remember, Jephtha was a good man and did what he believed was right. He was a strong man, in the prime of his life, but grief for his daughter broke him down, and he lived only six years longer, lonely and heart broken.

All this happened many hundred years ago. But, children, just as sad things as this are happening even now in the world, and happening too because nobody tells the poor people any better. Why don't we tell them better? Children—say why? I will tell you a story I heard a missionary tell, which is as sad as the story of Jephtha's daughter. It is an entirely true story, for the missionary knew the little girl. There was a heathen

family of high rank living near the missionary's home. They were people of wealth and of education. They had one little daughter, a beautiful child, then twelve years old, with a bright, intelligent face, and a merry smile. In that province little girls were not shut up in zanas as they are in some places in India, and this girl was allowed to play in the beautiful grounds around her father's palace. But the law of their rank, according to their heathen religion, was that no little girl must speak to any man except to her father and brothers, and if she did, she must die or else her whole family would be disgraced in this world, and lost in the next. The child knew of this law, and as she played she would never look at any man or boy who passed by; but this missionary was a woman and when she passed, the child gave her a bright smile.

One day, however, when one of her brothers was sitting on a balcony where he could see her, the child was gathering some flowers not very far from the road. Just then a man rode up and said, "Little girl, which way

must I go to reach such a place?" Before she thought of his being a man, or thought of anything except to be glad to help a stranger find his way, she lifted her pretty head and pointing the right way, told him how to go. The stranger thanked her and rode on. It was a little thing, was it not, children? I have often wondered if that man knew of the terrible things he was bringing upon that child. He may have been a stranger in that province and may not have known of that law. Or he may not have thought of the child's rank, for children of the lower classes were allowed to talk to any one. Or he may have been in such a hurry that he did not stop to think, wrapped up as he was in his own business. So much harm comes to the world by not thinking! That was probably the reason the man spoke to her; he was so busy thinking of his own affairs he did not think, or he could have told by the color of her dress what her rank was. He rode on, but the brother went in and told her father and mother and other brothers what had happened.



As the missionary passed every day, she missed the child's sweet smile and never again saw her pretty face among the flowers. At first she thought the little girl might be somewhere else in the grounds, till as days passed on she saw the child no more, she feared she was sick. At last, one evening, some ten days after she had seen her last, the missionary had been detained at school till dusk, and as she was hurrying home, she met, coming out of one of the gates of the nobleman's yard, an old servant of the family. He had something rolled up in a large mat, carrying it carefully, and she could see even in the dusk that the man was trembling with feeling. When she came nearer she saw a pair of little feet hanging out of the mat. She caught the man's arm in fright, and asked him why he was carrying the child in the mat—he would smother her if he kept her head wrapped up so. He answered as well as he could, in a trembling voice, "She is already dead. I will come and tell you to-morrow," and on he hurried out of her sight.

Next day he came as he said, and after making the missionary promise most solemnly that she would never let any of his master's family know he had told her, he gave the story of the child's death. When her brother told how she had spoken to a strange man, her father called her in and asked if it was true. She said she had told the stranger which way to go, without thinking that she ought to have gone in the house and sent one of her brothers to talk to him. Her father told her she ought to have remembered the obligations of her high rank, so she must die for what she had done, but he added that if she would starve to death she could thereby save her soul, which would be lost if she died in any other way. "How the poor little lamb begged for her life," the old man said, and told how the older brother caught her in his arms, saying, "Father, cannot I die instead of her? I will starve myself to death or be buried alive if it will only save her." The father shook his head; the only way was for her to starve herself to death. And at last

that child, only twelve years old, agreed. They took her upstairs and locked her in an empty room. And there she staid alone, speaking to no one till she died. Once a day water was put in the door and the servant looked to see if she were still alive. And when she died, she could not be buried with the family ancestors, but her body was rolled up in a mat and carried and buried among the poor. "I'd like to kill that brute of a father," said the missionary, the tears rolling down her cheeks as she forgot everything else in her desire to avenge the dead child. "Don't blame him," said the old man, earnestly, "don't blame him, I think it will kill him yet; for he loved his only little girl better than he loved all his boys. He would have been glad to die for her; there is not one of them who would not have died for her. But there was no other way for her to enter paradise at last. Her father has not slept since she was locked up. He walks the floor night and day, and looks thinner and worse than her sweet face did when I rolled her in the

mat. Oh! teacher, if you could only have taught him your religion before she died. Tell it to me, teacher, I want to believe it."

Children, that poor girl died, not far off in past ages like Jephtha's daughter, but right here in our own day; died so, because her father did not know about Jesus Christ, but believed that was the way to save her soul. If he had only known the Gospel! If he could only have been taught about the Bible! Who can tell what innocent children may be dying as cruelly to-day because their parents know no better? Would you not have been willing to do anything or give anything to have saved that little girl's life? I have told you this story, as I heard the missionary tell it, to let you know how sore is the need of our doing all we can, and doing it quickly, to send the Gospel to the heathen. That girl's father was a good man for a heathen. He was well educated and of high rank, but if he had only known of Christ—if he had only known!—if he had only known!

Suppose during those two months that

Jephtha's daughter lived, the priests and Levites at Shiloh had known about her fate so soon to come upon her, and had refused to go and tell Jephtha the truth about God, what would you think of them? You cannot think of words strong enough to tell how mean and bad they would have been not to hurry off to Jephtha as fast as they could go and save that only daughter's life, because it was so far to Gilead, or cost so much to go, or really there were so many other calls made upon them, they could not do anything to help save the poor girl. And would it not have been the meanest thing in the world, because Jephtha had saved them and their families from their enemies? Will we be any better if we refuse to send the Gospel to save the heathen? How can we rest or be satisfied while there are people in the world who never heard of Christ? If ever you think you are tired of working and giving to missions, or that you have done enough, then think of that poor girl locked up alone and starving to death.

She was willing to die, because she thought that was the way to save her soul. Does she not shame you about your souls? You are not called upon to starve yourselves or to die or do anything else to save your souls. Jesus has done all that for you. He died to save you. What you have to do is to repent and believe. Repent means to turn away, in your heart, from everything wrong, and believe means you must take Christ as your Lord and Saviour. If that heathen girl died to save her soul, will you not let Jesus die to save yours? As you kneel to say your prayers to-night, I wish you to think of that poor heathen girl, and to ask God to forgive your sins for Jesus' sake, and to give you grace to work and give for the salvation of others. Jesus suffered and died for you—can you not love and trust Him? And will you not show your love by doing all you can to send the Gospel to heathen lands, that no more children shall die as that little girl died?

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